



MHFA England



My Whole Self

Our statement of intent on race equity

As many in society wake up to the racism People of Colour and Black people have faced for generations, it is clear that action is long overdue. At Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England, we are also clear about the urgency of playing our part in dismantling systemic and Institutional Racism.

Our vision is to improve the mental health of the nation, through our mission to train one in 10 of the adult population in mental health awareness and skills. This can only be achieved if there is equal access to mental health education and skills training, as statistically People of Colour and Black people experience poorer mental health outcomes than the rest of the population.

Since publishing our [Statement of Solidarity](#) last month, we have been thinking hard about what more we need to do to prioritise [anti-racist](#) principles - both within our organisation and in the communities we work in.

We know that too often the onus is on Black people and People of Colour to drive the change that's needed but we know it is the responsibility of white people to understand white privilege and systemic racism and lead change, whilst all the time amplifying the voices of Black people and People of Colour.

In recent weeks, we have been led by People of Colour and Black colleagues and members of our community in consulting on the action we can and must take. We have started developing new guidance on supporting People of Colour and Black employees' mental health and we have launched a book club on race and race equity topics for our staff to engage with.

But we know we need to do more. So today, building on the discussions and insights we have gathered over the past six weeks, we publish a new Statement of Intent. This sets out the actions that will sit behind our long-term commitment to be an anti-racist organisation.

In committing to these steps, we want to ensure anti-racist principles and practices are woven into everything we do. We want our mission, vision and values as a social enterprise to reflect this. And we want to leverage our experience and expertise in raising awareness, breaking stigma and changing attitudes and behaviours to help build a more equitable society.

Through working with our Instructor Member community and other leading organisations in the mental health sector, we will challenge the racial disparities in mental health



outcomes and the experiences that People of Colour and Black people have when accessing mental health services. We are committed to breaking down this wider systemic inequality.

What being anti-racist means at MHFA England

At MHFA England being an anti-racist social enterprise means actively challenging racism in everything we do and everything we touch – systematically ensuring our values, beliefs, policies, content and courses are underpinned by a clear commitment to race equity and racial justice.

This will mean building a diverse MHFA England community and working together as staff, National Trainers and Instructor Members for the long haul. It will require individual and collective responsibility for listening and hearing, self-reflection and understanding white privilege, learning about Black history and systemic racism, unlearning racism and amplifying the voices of People of Colour and Black people.

Achieving equity and reducing racial disparities in mental health outcomes will mean developing the empathy, courage, understanding and skills we have as a community to talk about race, racism and privilege.

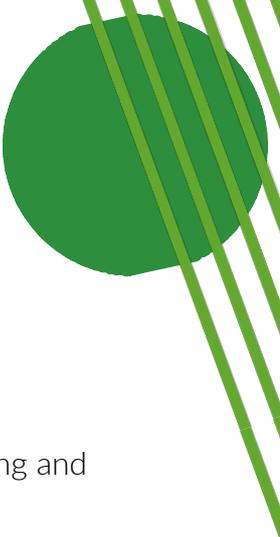
It also means working collaboratively with others and holding ourselves and each other accountable for the progress we make, learning together, and being honest about our successes and failures.

Our mission, vision and values

As a social enterprise, our vision is to improve the mental health of the nation and our mission is to train one in 10 of the adult population in mental health awareness and skills. We want to create an unshakable belief that we can all talk freely about mental health and seek support when we need it, regardless of the colour of our skin or ethnic background.

Our work to tackle racism is fundamental to this vision and mission, and the actions we set out here will ensure that our commitments to be an anti-racist organisation go hand in hand with our social purpose. In addition, these will help us fulfil our commitments in signing up to both Business in the Community's [Race at Work Charter](#) and ACEVO's Diversity Leadership Principles.

We will also strive to reflect our new commitments in our organisational values: **Accessible, Clear, Empowering, Innovative, Trustworthy.**



Making it happen

We have identified four key areas for change:

Our community: Looking again at our internal policies, data we collect and learning and development opportunities we provide to our community.

Our training: Taking a root and branch approach in reviewing our training, from our course content, Instructor Training Programme and representation among Instructor Members to our marketing materials, resources and guidance.

Our social purpose: Reinvesting to support People of Colour and Black communities to access our training and going the extra mile to ensure early intervention through Mental Health First Aid can be a positive force in reducing disproportionate use of the Mental Health Act.

Our campaigning: Using our campaigning work including the My Whole Self campaign to promote anti-racism by sharing practical resources.

Implementing change

To take this work forward we will take the following actions:

- Establish a project team with a dedicated budget and integrate actions into team members' day-to-day work
- Develop a scorecard to track and measure progress against our commitments, set out clear timelines and publish progress updates at the end of each quarter starting w/c 28 September 2020
- Provide routes of engagement for People of Colour and Black staff and Instructor Members and white staff and Instructor Members
- Establish a project oversight group from across MHFA England headed up by Chief Executive Simon Blake, to sponsor the work and monitor progress



Starting with our community

Reviewing our policies

We recognise that being an anti-racist organisation starts at home; that is to say with our staff and the policies that underpin our day-to day working.

We will therefore review all internal policies to ensure they reflect an anti-racist approach. This includes our policies on recruitment, selection, induction and progression.



We will also survey our staff and gather diversity data to ensure we can make better informed decisions and use equality impact assessments where appropriate.

Training and development

As a training organisation we know the impact that effective learning and development has in building a path for progress.

To this end, we will work in partnership with Global Black Thrive, our Instructor Member community, staff and others to provide learning and development opportunities on racism, race, ethnicity and mental health, white privilege and allyship for our own staff, MHFA England Instructor Members and Mental Health First Aiders. This will include developing a specific CPD on these topics that all our Instructor Members will be required to take.

We are also committing to publish guidance for employers on supporting the wellbeing of People of Colour and Black colleagues, which we will champion with our own staff.

Building training for change

As a social enterprise specialising in mental health training, education is our activism. Our Instructor Members have changed how over half a million people think about mental health and mental illness in the past decade.

In this time, we have seen the power of knowledge to change hearts and minds. We now want our training to be a force for greater understanding of the intersectionality – the cross over – between mental ill health and racial inequalities.

Almost exactly a year ago we announced the inclusion of statistics on mental health of Black people, People of Colour and LGBT+ people across our course materials.

Our intention now is to go a step further and embed new learning on race and mental health in MHFA England training.

Over the next year we will:

- Set up an expert panel from across our community to:
 - Review and strengthen our courses' content on the impact of race, racism, oppression, inequalities and intersectionality in mental health and wellbeing, and develop guidance for Instructor Members to deliver appropriately
 - Ensure our quality assurance systems are informed by anti-racist principles

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- Scope out the development of a specific course on race and mental health in partnership with experts
 - Review sources of support listed in MHFA England course manuals with a view to strengthening signposting to bespoke mental health support available for People of Colour and Black people
 - Review our Instructor Training programme to include a stronger focus on the impact of race, racism, oppression, inequalities and intersectionality in mental health and wellbeing
 - Establish a dedicated forum on race and mental health on our Instructor Member Workplace from Facebook hub to promote discussion, best-practice and knowledge sharing among our Instructor Member community
 - Review and strengthen the representation of People of Colour and Black people in our marketing and product content
 - Assess and improve the diversity of plenary speakers (experts by experience) who give presentations as part of our Instructor Training programme
 - Create an action plan for improving the diversity of our Instructor Member community

Supporting Black-led organisations

Improving the mental health of the nation means working in areas of greatest need and where we can have the greatest impact. It means supporting people in the workplace, future generations, LGBTQ+ people, People of Colour and Black people, the NHS, and those that may not be able to afford high quality training.

MHFA England supports communities across the country by reinvesting its profits to provide subsidised training to ensure everyone has access to vital mental health awareness and skills. **We now want to commit to partnering with and supporting Black-led organisations to access fully subsidised MHFA England training.**

People of Colour and Black people experience mental ill health at a disproportionately higher rate than average so we know that, as in many areas, achieving equity means going further.

We also know the impact Mental Health First Aid can have in helping people get on a path to access support early on before they reach crisis stage. The disproportionate sectioning of People of Colour and Black people under the Mental Health Act tells us that more needs to be done to break stigma, encourage conversation and promote early intervention in these communities.



Campaigning

As a social enterprise we also reinvest in our [campaigning work](#), from awareness raising campaigns like Address Your Stress and Empower Half Hour, to the 'Where's Your Head At?' campaign and its calls for parity of esteem for workplace mental health.

Our latest campaign, [My Whole Self](#), originally set out to highlight the connection between diversity and inclusion and health and wellbeing. **Phase two of this campaign will focus on promoting free guidance for employers on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of People of Colour and Black colleagues.**

We will work with campaign advocates and our network of Instructor Members and Mental Health First Aiders to ensure this guidance reaches every corner of the workplace. It will be promoted on an ongoing basis to all organisations we work with alongside other resources such as our [Workplace Wellbeing toolkit](#). We encourage employers we work with to share our free resources with their staff as a way of sensitising people to the idea of talking about mental health before training is introduced.

In all, we recognise that improving our organisational practices, enhancing accessibility to MHFA England training, and embedding learning about race and mental health in our courses can only play a small part in tackling systemic and Institutional Racism and its impacts.

However, **we are committed to collaborating with others in the mental health sector to hold government to account over racial inequalities for People of Colour and Black people in mental health outcomes** and we will work wherever possible to promote anti-racism in our sector including in mental health research we are involved in.

Our commitments

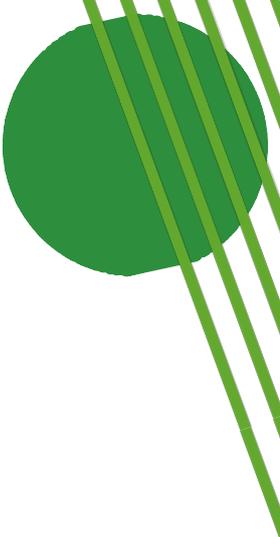
To summarise, as set out above, we are committing to:

1. Establish a project team with senior sponsorship and a dedicated budget that will hold responsibility for actioning our commitments, providing quarterly progress reports and engaging with our community throughout the process
 2. Ensure our policies reflect an anti-racist approach and review our approaches to recruitment, selection, induction and progression in-line with best practice
 3. Gather data on our staff and Instructor Member community to inform our decision making
 4. Work in partnership with Global Black Thrive, our Instructor Members, staff and others to develop learning and development opportunities on white privilege,
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racism, race, ethnicity and mental health for our community including a specific CPD that all our Instructor Members will be required to take

5. Review and strengthen our courses' content on the impact of race, racism, oppression, inequalities and intersectionality in mental health and wellbeing, and develop guidance for Instructor Members to deliver appropriately
 6. Ensure our quality assurance systems are informed by anti-racist principles
 7. Scope out the development of specific courses on race and mental health in partnership with experts
 8. Review sources of support listed in MHFA England course manuals with a view to strengthening signposting to bespoke mental health support available for People of Colour and Black people
 9. Review our Instructor Training programme to include a stronger focus on the impact of race, racism, oppression, inequalities and intersectionality in mental health and wellbeing
 10. Establish a dedicated forum on race and mental health on our Instructor Member Workplace from Facebook hub to promote discussion, best-practice and knowledge sharing among our Instructor Member community
 11. Review and strengthen the representation of People of Colour and Black people in our marketing and product content
 12. Create an action plan for improving the diversity of our Instructor Member community
 13. Support Black-led organisations to access fully subsidised MHFA England training
 14. Use the second phase of the My Whole Self campaign to promote guidance for employers on supporting the wellbeing of People of Colour and Black colleagues
 15. Collaborate with others in the mental health sector to hold government to account over racial inequalities for People of Colour and Black people in mental health outcomes
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Our values

We have built on our existing organisational values to reflect and include our commitment to be an anti-racist organisation.

Accessible:

- Improving access for People of Colour and Black communities to MHFA England training through our reinvestment work and partnerships
- Improving early intervention and signposting to support through Mental Health First Aid for People of Colour and Black people

Clear:

- Being clear in our commitment to put anti-racist principles at the heart of what we do, from our training, and campaigning to our organisational policies and practices

Empowering:

- Continuing to empower People of Colour and Black people from our community of Instructor Members, staff and Mental Health First Aiders to have a voice and guide us as we work to put anti-racist principles at the heart of our work
- Empowering more People of Colour and Black people to support their own and others' mental health through our training
- Empowering everyone with accurate information on the intersectionality between race and mental ill health through MHFA England courses
- Empowering those we train to be allies to People of Colour and Black people experiencing mental health issues, including as a result of racism and discrimination

Innovative:

- Reviewing our training to ensure it includes a stronger focus on race a mental health and working to develop new courses on race and mental health

Trustworthy:

- Being led by People of Colour and Black People in the actions we are committing to and being honest about where we need to improve
 - Holding ourselves accountable and following through on this Statement of Intent by publishing a progress update this time next year
 - Being driven by our social purpose to improve the mental health of the nation in everything we do
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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everybody within and outside of the MHFA England community who have been involved in discussions, forums and conversations to inform this Statement of Intent. We look forward to continued collaboration on implementing the agreed actions.

Further reading

For those looking for educational information on race, racism, white privilege and microaggressions, we recommend the following books, articles and videos as a starting point:

- [Not-racist v anti-racist: what's the difference?](#) – John Amaechi
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) – Peggy McIntosh
- [How to be a better ally to your Black colleagues](#) – Stephanie Creary
- [Racial microaggressions in everyday life](#) – Derald Wing Sue
- [What is a microaggression? 14 things people think are fine to say at work, but are actually racist, sexist, or offensive](#) – Marguerite Ward and Rachel Premack
- How microaggressions are like mosquito bites, same difference ([YouTube video](#))
- Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race – Reni Eddo Lodge ([extract](#))
- Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire – Akala ([extract](#))
- Brit(ish): On Race, Identity and Belonging – Afua Hirsch ([extract](#))