



Imperial College Healthcare  
NHS Trust



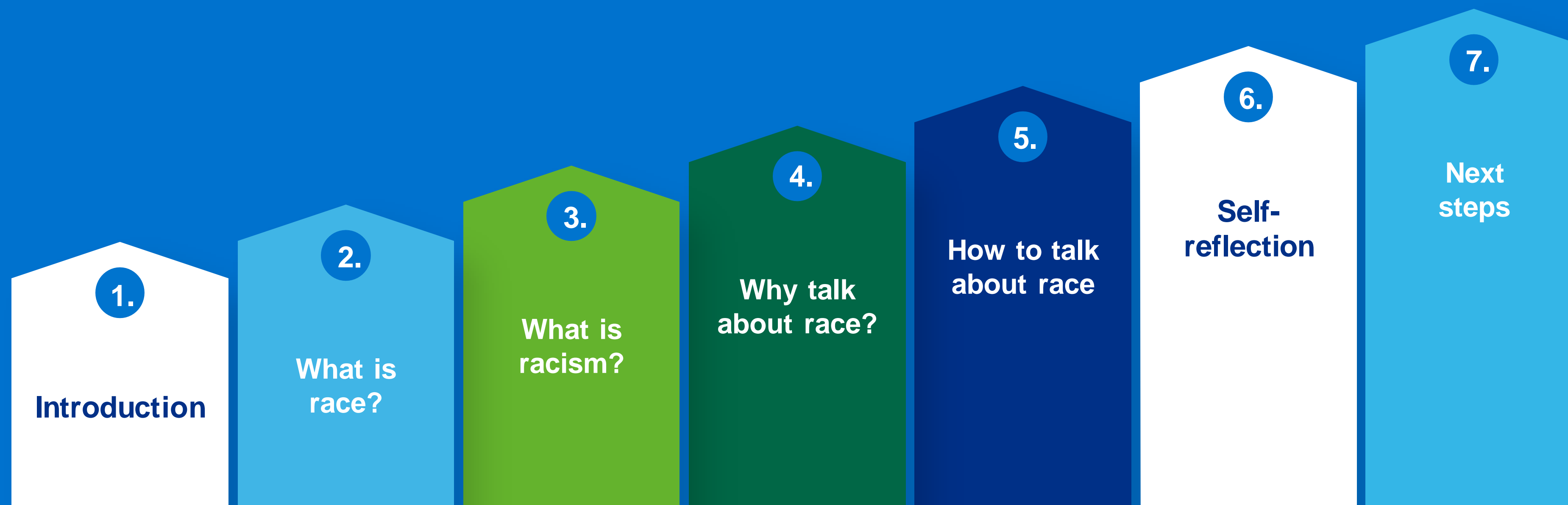
**Toolkit:**

**Talking about race**

**Equality  
Diversity  
Inclusion**



# Contents



# In this toolkit:



A key finding from the 2015 *Race at work* survey conducted by outreach charity Business in the Community revealed that employees from all ethnicities felt their employers were not comfortable talking about race.

This toolkit aims to make it easier to talk about race with your colleagues, and provides questions for you to reflect on.



# What do we mean by race?



Race is one of the nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010.

Under the Equality Act, race can mean several things:

**Being a member of an ethnic or racial group**  
(people who share the same protected characteristics of ethnicity or race)

**Someone's nationality**  
(including citizenship)

**Someone's ethnic or national origins**  
(which may be different from their current nationality)

# What do we mean by race?



A person's **race** is determined by the physical characteristics that define a person as being a member of a specific group: skin colour, hair colour and texture, eye colour, facial features, physical build and so on.

**Example:**

Roshan's race is South Asian, specifically Sri Lankan



A person's **ethnicity** is the cultural characteristics that define a person as being a member of a specific group: language, accent, religion, styles of dress, hairstyles, social customs, food and dietary preferences or restrictions.

**Example:**

Afua's ethnicity is Black British



A person's **nationality** is the legal sense of belonging to a specific political nation state through their citizenship (birth-right or naturalised).

**Example:**

Karol's nationality is Polish

# What is racism?

## A racist ideology is:

Any action, practice or belief that reflects the worldview that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”

Believing that there is a casual link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioural features

Believing that some races are naturally superior to others

Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of biological race has been recognised as a cultural invention, without any scientific basis.



# What is racism?

**The Oxford dictionary defines it as** “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalised”.

**Racism at an interpersonal level** is when an individual is racist towards another individual or racial group.

**At a structural and institutional level**, it's discrimination or unequal treatment on the basis of membership of a particular ethnic group (typically one that is a minority or marginalised), arising from systems, structures or expectations that have become established within an institution or organisation.

Listen to author and activist Akala speak about "everyday racism" and the way it has been internalised.

**Note:** this video contains the use of slurs and language that people may find offensive or upsetting.



**Click on the image to watch the video**



# What are the different types of racism?

## Institutional or systemic

Where policies, procedures and practices within organisations produce inequitable outcomes for some racial groups and/or advantages for other racial groups

## Structural

Where the cumulative and compounding effects of a range of factors – including cultural, ideological and historical – create an environment that disadvantages certain racial groups

**Example:** Anti-Black attitudes have stemmed from racism and influenced many cultures that were colonised by British and other imperialistic nations. This has led to racism between different racial groups, for example anti-Black prejudice within communities that have also faced racial oppression.

Watch this short video on the systemic racism faced by the family of Stephen Lawrence as they sought justice for his murder, and the changes resulting from the case.

*Warning: Some viewers may find the content upsetting.*



Click on the image to watch the video





# Why is it important to talk about race?

53%

of the Trust's workforce are from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background.

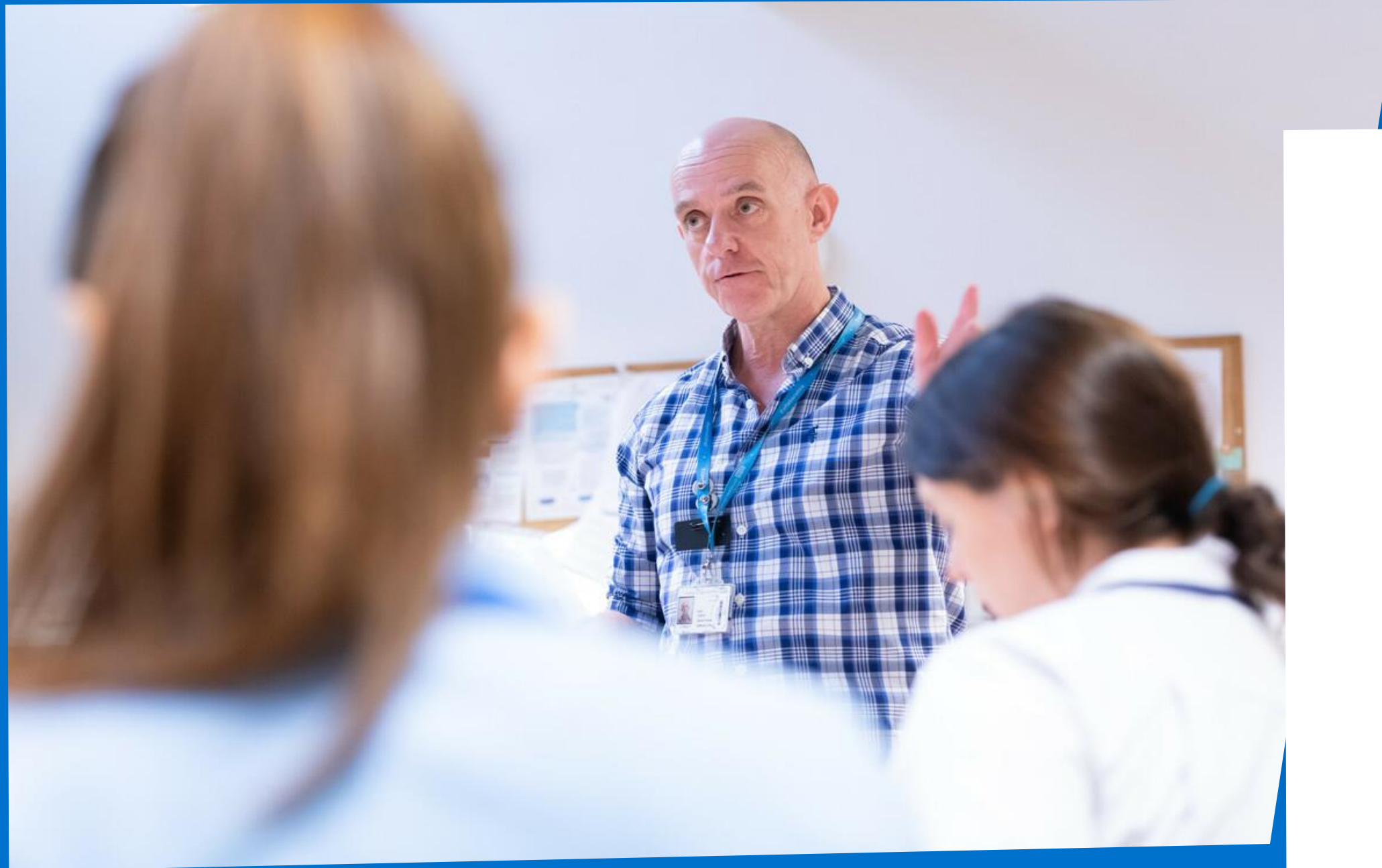
You might expect the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic senior managers to be the same – but it isn't. In April 2021, only 22% of people in bands 8b upwards were Black, Asian and minority ethnic.

65.5%

of staff from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic background believe the Trust offers equal opportunity for career progression or promotion, compared to **81.9%** of white staff.

Source (both statistics): [Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion annual report 2020/2021](#)

# Why is it important to talk about race?



Talking about race helps us to understand how the disparity in attitudes towards people of different races has happened, and aids us in moving towards dismantling systems that allow such a gap to develop.

Having conversations that involve race also contributes to making the Trust a welcoming and inclusive place to work, where everyone can be themselves.

By listening and reflecting, we can ensure the culture here at the Trust is one of openness and a willingness to learn.



# The benefits of talking about race

It's important to talk about the realities of the world in order to understand the experiences of others. Understanding other's experiences brings us closer to them and helps us to fight for more equitable and just practices together. Talking about race can actively work against the unconscious biases that you may have towards other races within your mind

At the same time, it's crucial that we all develop a real understanding of the injustices that have been building over time (not just over decades, but hundreds of years). And these injustices are nowhere close to being solved.

The issues Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups face are real, and they must be talked about. Silence adds to the injustice.

Now is the time to have open, honest, and vulnerable conversations with people in your life.



**For more information on the benefits of talking about race, check out the following:**



[Article – We need to talk about race](#)



[Article – Why we should talk about race](#)

# How to have conversations about race

No two conversations about race will be the same – each conversation will depend on the individual, their experiences and the mood or atmosphere of the conversation.

Conversations will be more productive when you and the other person are committed to having the discussion, but also when they are held during a protected time. You won't get the best out of a rushed or distracted conversation.





# Tips for having conversations about race

## Choose your moment

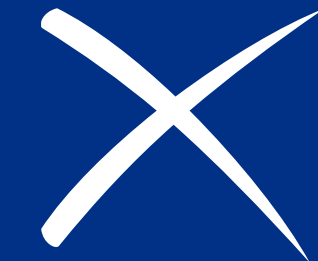
Don't spring a conversation about race on someone who may not be prepared or be in the right mindset. Additionally, if there is a chance you may not be able to fully engage with the conversation, reconsider starting it – but ensure that the other person is aware of when the conversation will be continued.

### Do



Ask to have a conversation about race and setting up a meeting

### Don't



Commence a conversation about race while the other person is on their lunch break

# Tips for having conversations about race

## Respect people's individuality

People's experiences are all unique. Don't assume that because two people are the same race or have the same cultural background that they will have the same experiences or opinions. Each person speaks for themselves, so listen and engage with each person on their own terms.



## Example:

Anil and Harleen may both have Indian heritage, but they have different faiths, come from different regions and have had different experiences.





# Tips for having conversations about race

## Engage with an open mind

Accept that you may not have all the knowledge right away and that you may learn something new from the conversation. It's ok to ask questions, but ensure the questions are relevant and will give you information that you can use to help.

Listen to your partner in conversation – it may be tempting to be defensive, especially when someone is talking about their experience, but reacting with anger, guilt or arguing won't be conducive to a productive conversation.

Listen to Robin Diangelo, author of *White Fragility*, talk about the common myths about race

 [Click on the image to watch the video](#)



# Tips for having conversations about race

## Know how to address causing offence

If you inadvertently cause offence, apologise and learn from the experience. Some questions you should not ask include:

requesting to touch someone's hair

asking invasive questions about religious dress

asking someone where they "really" come from. Instead, you could ask about where their family originates from.

Watch this short comedy sketch from BBC3: *Where are you from? The game*



Click on the image to watch the video





# Tips for having conversations about race

## Respect your partner in conversation

Ensure you are actively listening to the person you are speaking with, and don't speak over them or deny their experiences if they are telling you something that is uncomfortable for you to hear.

If an individual shares that they have been called an offensive word or phrase, you should not repeat this, even in conversation with them.



# Tips for having conversations about race

## Use "I" statements

Remember that your experiences are not universal – you are speaking from your perspective. There will be different perspectives, which will be just as valid as yours.

## Avoid phrases like "I don't see colour" or "We're all the same race"

Saying things like this minimises the experience of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people who have faced difficulties and discrimination because of their ethnicity. It's impossible to fix systemic inequalities if you don't recognise that they exist and the way they affect people.





# Some questions for self-reflection

How has your racial identity affected your life experience so far?

How have you felt about the increased focus and conversation about race in society after recently publicised events?

Are you aware of any experiences of racial discrimination in our organisation, either your own experiences or those of others?

How has your racial identity affected your experience within the Trust?

How do you feel we as an organisation have responded to the increased awareness of the issues of racial discrimination?

Do you feel we do enough as an organisation to ensure equal opportunities for everyone?

# After the conversation

You should be prepared that these conversations may be emotionally tiring – for you, and especially for your colleague. Thank them for their time and ensure that they know that they can find support if needed.

It's also important to ensure that change comes about through the conversations. It may be helpful for you to summarise what you've heard, and feedback what changes will be made. You can speak to the [EDI team](#) if you need advice on this.





# It is not enough to just read this toolkit



What are you going to do about what you've read here?

Your learning shouldn't stop with just reading this toolkit. You must put into practice everything that you have learnt.

It is important to start having the uncomfortable conversations necessary to learn more and educate yourself on the issues of racism and race equity.

## Things to do



- [Join one of our Race Equality networks \(allies welcome\)](#)
- [Learn about our BAME Ambassadors](#)
- [Check out the Multidisciplinary Race Equality Network's reading list](#)
- [Read the 10 Rs of talking about race](#)
- [Explore more EDI resources](#)
- [Get in touch with the EDI team](#)
- [Meet the EDI Team](#)

# Credits

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[www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-work/equality-diversity-and-inclusion](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-work/equality-diversity-and-inclusion)

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