

Children's Commissioner for Wales' Anti-Racism Statement

The systematic discrimination and disadvantage experienced by people from diverse communities came sharply into focus in 2020. Globally, the Black Lives Matter movement highlighted the anger and sadness of people from diverse communities throughout the western world at decades and centuries of misuse of power, racism and unconscious bias by our institutions, communities and individuals. The pandemic also sharpened our awareness about racial discrimination, due to the heavier toll on health, higher fatalities, and more systematic hardship, experienced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. Our own data shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children from diverse communities in Wales have unfortunately been more likely to experience barriers during the pandemic than their white peers.

As an organisation, we are overwhelmingly of white ethnicity and culture. This places us at a disadvantage in terms of potentially missing out on more diverse opinions, experiences and expertise, particularly but not only when it comes to engaging with and understanding the needs of children and young people from diverse communities. We do not currently provide strong role models for children of all ethnicities, who may assume that human rights is something that only white adults are experts in, even if at an unconscious level. We want to change.

Our 2020 Coronavirus and Me survey, while hugely successful, had a slight under-representation of children from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in its response rate. The subsequent results suggest we need to engage more closely with diverse communities and we will need the cultural competence to do this effectively and to understand and analyse the response we receive.

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-our-work/coronavirus-and-me-results/>

<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/coronavirus-our-work/coronavirus-and-me-bame-children/>

Our commitment

Everyone working for the Commissioner is committed to working to end racism and oppression across society as part of our all-embracing commitment to promoting human rights, equality, diversity and inclusion. We always aim to treat people fairly and with respect, learn about other cultures and nationalities, and raise awareness about racism and racial bullying. We will actively challenge racism within our organisation and in other organisations that we meet. We will aim to identify and remove any institutional racism in our own organisation and in wider society.

Our plans on how to change, and what we have done so far this year

This is our first anti-racism statement and provides a benchmark for us to build from. We commit to reviewing progress against our actions and this statement annually.

- We have been developing our culture, policies and practices so that we can become an actively anti-racist organisation in everything we do and can bring about meaningful change.
- We have established a cross-team equalities project to lead on this work, and have developed a Race Equalities Action plan informed by the Race Equality Code 2020 to improve the way that we think about and respond to racism
<https://governance4fe.co.uk/the-race-equality-code-2020-is-launched/>.
- We have researched job advertisements and job specifications best practice and made changes to our current language use and formats.

- Our job descriptions have been updated to show that we value lived experience as a form of expertise. Application forms for new posts have been amended to ensure personal details are removed before shortlisting, and education institutions are not required.
- We have introduced a guaranteed interview scheme for candidates from diverse community backgrounds.
- We are developing information and resources for the Team on taking effective positive action.
- We have sought advice and guidance about how to develop our organisation from experts in the field. We have an on-going reciprocal collaboration with a third sector specialist organisation to support this development work.
- We will report on progress on our Race Equalities Action plan in our annual report to Welsh Government.

The values that underpin our work:

- Children and young people play a clear and genuine part in informing and helping direct our work.
- We ensure that children and young people with whom we have contact are kept safe through our policies and practice.
- We aim to combat discrimination in all forms and adhere to equalities legislation in all spheres of our work.
- We give English and Welsh languages equal status in our organisation and external communications, and encourage the use of Welsh as an everyday language in our office.
- We adhere to the One Welsh Public Services Values and principles of our work.

What does the Children's Commissioner for Wales do?

- Supports children and young people to find out about their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Listens to children and young people to find out what's important to them
- Advises children, young people and those who care for them if they think they've been treated unfairly
- Influences government and other organisations who say they're going to make a difference to children's lives, making sure they keep their promises to children and young people
- Speaks up for children and young people in Wales on important issues