



*Making Organisations More Inclusive*

**Evaluation Report on Equality Training 2021**



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# **Report on the Evaluation of Equality Training 2021**

Commissioned by Race Equality Network

Designed and facilitated by Empowering Minds Consultancy

Report compiled by Race Equality Network and Empowering Minds Consultancy

## **Contents**

### **1. Summary**

### **2. Purpose**

### **3. Attendance**

### **4. Key Findings (Themes)**

- Inequality terminology
- Unconscious racial bias
- Anti-racism and Whiteness
- Knowledge and understanding of frontline staff on issues of equality and diversity
- Increasing diversity and reaching BAME residents with services (mental health, bereavement, age, healthcare)
- Inequalities due to COVID

### **5. Evidence (Responses to Questions)**

#### **6a. Research (Race Equality Network Survey)**

#### **6b. Research (Findings)**

### **7. Feedback and Evaluation**

### **8. Recommendations**

## **1. Summary**

In March 2021, Race Equality Network (REN) was funded by Equality Together to deliver a series of six Equality Training sessions which were delivered virtually via Zoom. The aim of the sessions was to raise awareness of inequalities faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, especially those exacerbated by COVID-19. Furthermore, the sessions aimed to assist voluntary sector organisations provide a people-centred approach to having difficult conversations and prevent the effects of these inequalities within the sector. REN commissioned Sofia Mahmood Director of Empowering Minds Consultancy to design, facilitate and evaluate the sessions.

Six sessions were delivered under the title of 'Making Organisation More Inclusive', each with a maximum of 15 participants in attendance. The sessions combined information provision,

discussion, Q&A, and feedback. Each session was also attended by a REN member of staff to introduce the sessions and aid the discussions.

Promotional material was created by Race Equality Network, and was disseminated through Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and email.

## **2. Purpose**

The delivery of the Equality Training by Race Equality Network was organised after a brighter spotlight has been placed on inequality across the district during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus has a disproportionate effect on people from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities, which in turn has a significant effect on the mental health of these communities. COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities in literacy, education, employment, housing, and digital access that are far more prevalent in these communities. In addition, there has been an increased focus on tackling overt acts of racism, hate crime and violence, especially in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020.

The primary purpose of the training was to better equip staff of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations with a greater knowledge and understanding of racial inequality, why it exists and how it presents itself in this sector and in UK society more widely. The sessions aimed to provide the attendees with increased confidence to have discussions on this topic, support colleagues or volunteers who may experience everyday racism or unconscious bias within their workplace, and ultimately strive to prevent the effects of this inequality from impacting the victims' lives or from taking place at all.

The training sessions provided people with an overview of what is meant by inequality, and how it affects Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities as well as providing example of other inequalities such as those faced by gay, lesbian, transgender, and disabled people.

An important part of the training was to encourage attendees to understand that engaging with this subject is essential for any organisations looking to provide an inclusive and meaningful service in Bradford. It aimed to remove the hesitancy and fear in some predominantly white organisations around inequality terminology, having uncomfortable conversations or acknowledging unconscious bias.

## **3. Attendance**

Over 35 organisations participated in the training. On average there were 10 people per session, with maximum capacity limit placed at 15. Most participants were white, middle-aged, and female. Although some participants admitted to attending the training at the request of their employer, most also acknowledged that they believed the topic was an important one and an area they needed support in. Many participants claimed they were attending to learn from others, to hear how other organisations were coping under the strain of lockdowns and to learn methods of reaching new audiences. A small number of individuals from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds attended the sessions, and in some cases contributed to the training by sharing their lived experiences.

#### **4. Key Findings (Themes)**

The key findings and evidence from the training sessions have been divided into six themes:

- Knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity.
- Increasing diversity of organisations and delivering services to BAME residents.
- Inequality terminology
- Unconscious racial bias
- Anti-racism and Whiteness
- Effect of COVID-19

The themes identified above reflect the conversations and discussions that developed throughout all six training sessions, and correspond to responses attendees provided to three key questions:

***Why are you here today?***

***What are your concerns?***

***Where do you feel you need support?***

The themes successfully highlight the gaps in current awareness and engagement with the subject of racial inequality, the sensitivities that still exist around terminology and unconscious bias, and the lack of diversity and equality in some organisations and service provision within the VCS.

#### **5. Evidence (Responses to Questions)**

Below are responses to questions asked during the training sessions using the Zoom Chat function. The responses have been saved and anonymised with the permission of the attendees.

**Attendees were asked: *Why you are here today?***

“Here to understand different perspectives and insights and learn from others.”

“To improve my learning and have a better level of understanding to improve and support the level of care I am providing within my community.”

“To be more aware, speak to others and get other ideas and views.”

“To gain knowledge and understanding from this training so that I can share with my community and encourage them to get involved and access opportunities.”

“To keep learning about equality.”

“To help me see other perspectives. To bring into awareness things previously unconsidered.”

“[Anonymised] as a National Charity needs to be more inclusive & diverse.”

“To ensure I am up to date and offering inclusive support the best I can. It would be ignorant to think training like this is not important, no matter what your background.”

“To find ways to understand and support a group that uses and benefits from our services and look for ways to expand and build our support for BAME people.”

As can be seen in the responses above, the majority of reasons for attending the Equality Training relate to improving learning, knowledge and awareness. This clearly highlights a lack of education and training on the existence of, consequences of, and methods of tackling racial inequality in the workplace. The reasons for attending the training clearly highlight evidence relating to the first two themes; **Knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity** and **Increasing diversity of organisations and delivering services to BAME residents**.

**Attendees were asked: *What are your concerns [about racial equality and inclusion]?***

“Lack of knowledge regarding different cultures/traditions within an organisation”

“Inclusivity should be at all levels in recruitments board staff programme etc and not selective.”

“Even if one knows another culture the will to be inclusive is another matter and is a hard skill to implement.”

“I suppose a concern regarding inclusivity are those who are hard to reach.”

“Not a Box Tick!”

“Who is or has the power & perceived authority to enable inclusivity? What does it mean in terms of sustaining inclusivity and parity for all? Is it an invitation by the host group or a demand by a third party?”

“Inclusiveness and to become more people-centred for individuals.”

“Active inclusivity is what is needed, not passive.”

“How to remove barriers or obstacles in accessing our services that I, as a white person, can't see or understand.”

“Concern re: being able to represent and serve everybody in the community that may need our support. This includes reaching a diverse range of people/backgrounds but also showing representation in our workforce (we have a predominantly white British team, which does not represent the community either!”

The majority of concerns on the topic of racial equality and inclusion stem from a lack of understanding of cultural diversity and an awareness of the lack of representation within organisations. This is clear from the attendees acknowledging that their staff is predominantly white, which doesn't reflect the ethnicity of many service users they are trying to support.

**Attendees were asked: *Where do you feel you need support?***

“I am thinking of terminology e.g., a colleague stated the other day that she was told that 'BAME' was offensive.”

“Unconscious bias awareness and difficult conversations”

“More training of this nature will be very helpful as inclusion is a journey and it needs to be part of the organisational culture, for me I think I m happy with today's training.”

“Need help with approaches and involvement from key organisation such as Bradford Council or Council-led organisation in the Bradford District. And of course, help with awareness creating about equality and diversity such as those unconscious bias.”

“I think certain people need to spend more time with people from a different background/race/gender to themselves and have a conversation that is respectful to understand different perspectives.”

It is clear from this evidence that organisations within the VCS in Bradford and beyond require support in certain areas, many of which are covered by this training at least at an introductory level. The main areas of support that were highlighted include: education on equality terminology and language; awareness of unconscious bias; how to have difficult conversations within the workplace; engaging with governing bodies and funders such as Bradford Council on this topic; integration and cultural diversity within workplaces.

**6a. Research (Race Equality Network Survey)**

In addition to the training, Race Equality Network created a survey called ‘*What do you think of the term BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)?*’ The survey ran from March to May 2021. It was created in response to the heightened discussion around the validity and effectiveness of the acronym ‘BAME’, with many individuals claiming it to be outdated and irrelevant. The survey was shared via email with member organisations of REN, along with wide circulation on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to ensure further reach.

REN gathered 106 responses to the survey, which consisted of the five following questions.

1. Have you heard of this term before?
2. Do you feel comfortable using this term?
3. What do you think of the term BAME (Please tick all that apply)? *Useful, Confusing, Inclusive, Offensive, Modern, Outdated, Insightful, Ignorant, Representative, Exclusionary, Relevant, Irrelevant.*
4. Should people stop using the term BAME?
5. If yes, how should the UK refer to people who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background? Please share your suggestion below.

## **6b. Research (Findings)**

The below section of the report outlines the responses to the survey, followed by an analysis of these responses.

### **1. Have you heard of the term before?**

101 (95.3%) of participants answered Yes, 5 (4.7%) answered No.

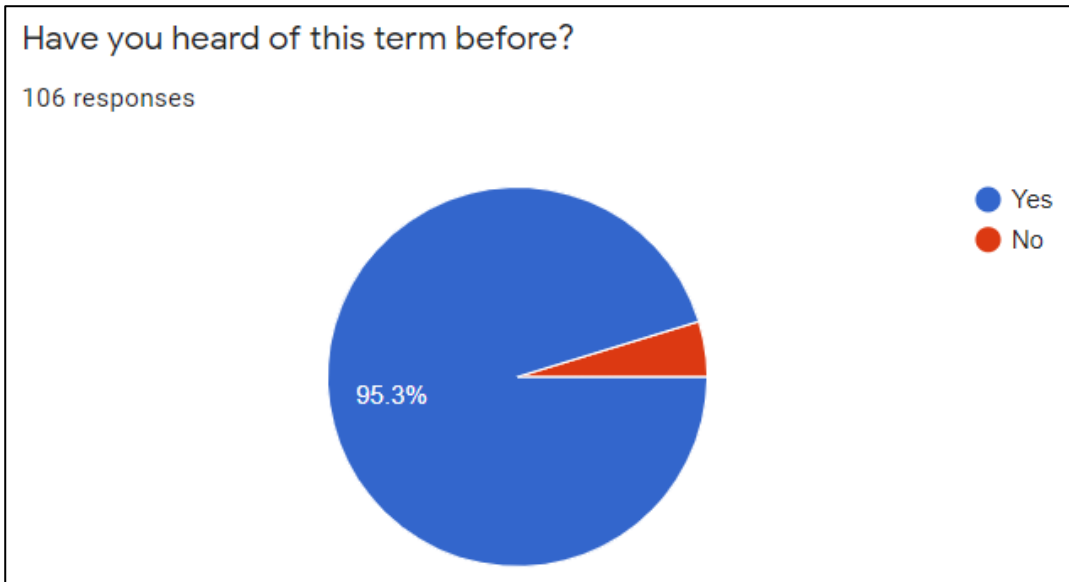


Figure 1: Responses to Question 1 of the Race Equality Network survey 'What do you think of the term BAME?', March 2021

### **2. Do you feel comfortable using this term?**

46 (43.4%) of participants answered No, 32 (30.2%) answered Yes and 28 (26.4%) answered Sometimes.

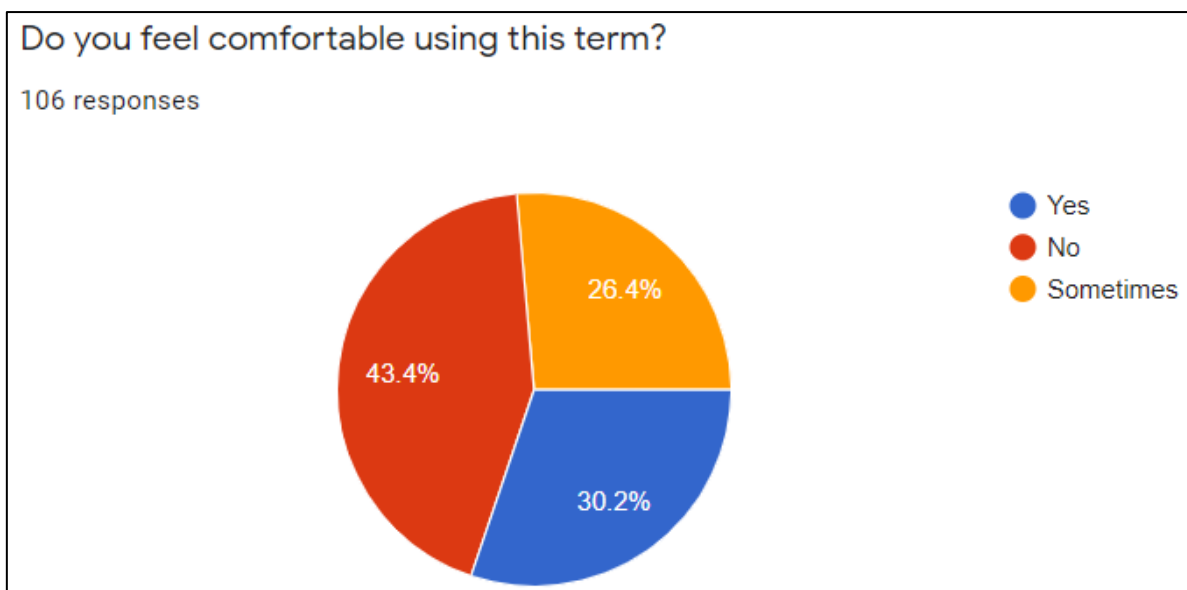


Figure 2: Responses to Question 2 of the Race Equality Network survey 'What do you think of the term BAME?', March 2021

These responses reflect a large portion of the discussion around the term BAME; although it can be seen as largely ineffective and counterproductive at describing people from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, many view it as a useful term 'sometimes' when discussing topics such as racism, inequality or demographics.

### 3. What do you think of the term BAME?

For this question, the survey provided a list of adjectives reflecting a variety of opinions. Participants were asked to select as many as were relevant. The most commonly selected word was 'Outdated' and the least commonly selected word was 'Insightful'.

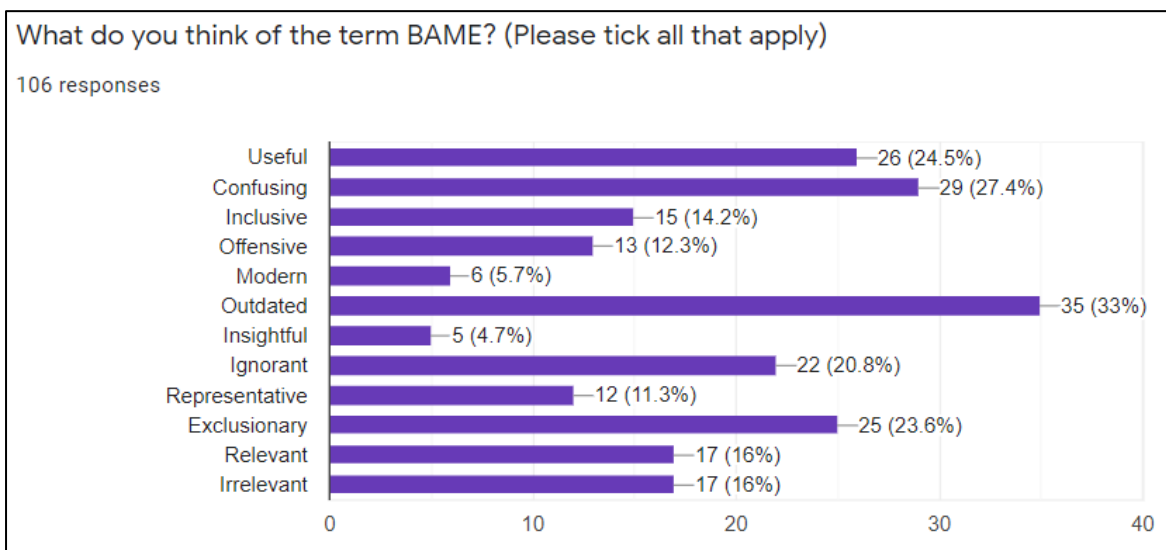


Figure 3: Responses to Question 3 of the Race Equality Network survey 'What do you think of the term BAME?', March 2021

### 4. Should people stop using the term BAME?

61 (57.5%) of participants answered Yes, 45 (42.5%) of participants answered No.

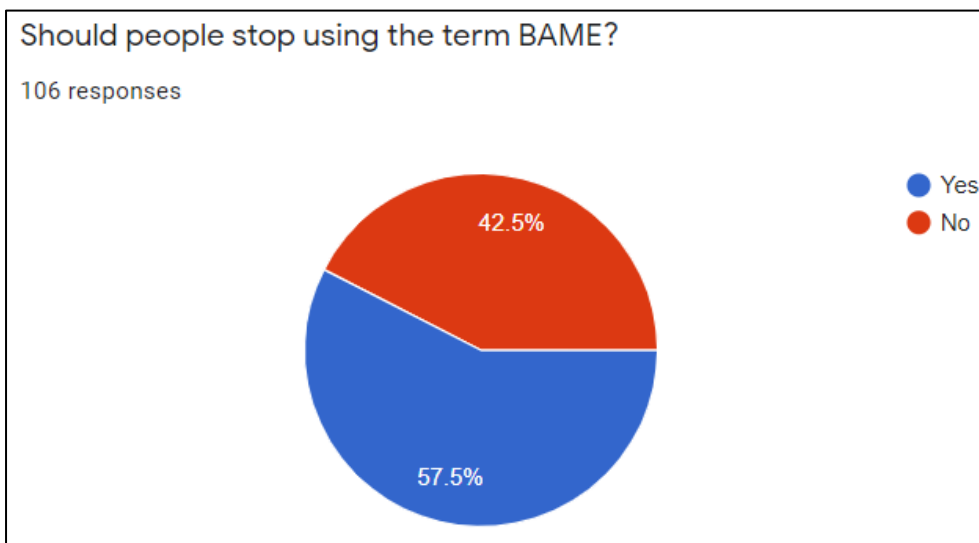


Figure 4: Responses to Question 4 of the Race Equality Network survey 'What do you think of the term BAME?' March 2021



## 5. If yes, how should the UK refer to people who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background? Please share your suggestion below.

The participants were offered a text entry box for this question, free to contribute suggestions for a replacement for the acronym. This option proved important, as 57.7% of participants stated the UK should stop using it.



Figure 5: A representative selection of the responses to Question 5 of the Race Equality Network survey 'What do you think of the term BAME?' March 2021

Responses varied, many including terms that are currently used alongside 'BAME' in the UK, US and globally. These included: Ethnic minorities, Minority Ethnic, Ethnic Community, Ethnically Diverse, Black/Asian, People of colour, diverse communities, Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) and African/Asian Diaspora.

There was a strong consensus for the eradication of any collective term for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and advised that people should be referred to as specifically as possible according to their nationality or ethnicity, such as Pakistani, Somali, Polish, or African, South Asian, Roma.

Identifying people this way within the VCS ensures not only that service providers are aware of which specific groups they are supporting and what their needs consist of, but also respects the fact that each community group is different and should not be categorised by their position as non-white. Furthermore, even outside of the specific needs of groups receiving support or services within the VCS, using specific terms also respects other areas of inequality such as the experience of racism being entirely different for each person.

## **7. Feedback and Evaluation**

Each participant of the training sessions was sent an evaluation form created by Empowering Minds Consultancy. The email responses were recorded and have been collated anonymously below.

### **Attendees were asked: *What did you most enjoy today?***

“Networking, listening to experiences and concerns of others.”

“Opportunity to share experience and meeting others, different views, explanations.”

“I often find it difficult to raise points in Zoom meetings, so would like to thank you for the effort of asking every participant for their opinions and feedback as it made for some thought-provoking discussions.”

“Meeting objectives, which is to promote inclusiveness.”

“Meeting individuals from other organisations”

“The discussions”

“Creation of a safe space to talk openly.”

These responses highlight the importance of facilitating inclusive discussions as part of Equality and Diversity training. Providing a space and platform for individuals to voice concerns, ask questions and share knowledge amplifies the session beyond one-way information sharing. With many participants stating the opportunity to meet others as their most enjoyable aspect, it is clear that training sessions are valuable as opportunities to meet individuals and organisations and forge connections for potential collaborative, inclusive working.

### **Attendees were asked: *What could be improved?***

“More clarity on aims and objectives of the training.”

“Could have been longer!”

“Include more group activities”

“Appreciate that this was a taster session, but it went by way too quickly!”

Though the evaluation largely consisted of praise for both content and facilitation of the training, there were some aspects noted for improvement. As seen above, these include clarity on aims and objectives and length of sessions, which will be reflected in the recommendations below.

## **7.Recommendations**

### **Further training sessions around equality and diversity.**

Race Equality Network recommends that increased training sessions are required to provide practitioners with further knowledge, experience and confidence on the topic of equality and diversity within their workplace and externally. The Race Equality Network has an existing waiting list of individuals from voluntary, community and statutory sector organisations who wish to attend the training. Sessions such as these, in addition to providing information and skills, are important for providing a platform for voices and views to be heard in a safe environment.

### **Extended training and provide courses.**

Although feedback from these sessions concluded that they were informative and beneficial, it was clear that in order to impact the attendees' approach to this topic more thoroughly the training should be longer than two hours and cover material in more depth. The content has potential to be the foundation for a course taking place over a series of weeks, which Race Equality Network are confident would be well attended.

### **Practical guidance to understanding terminology.**

Terminology frequently becomes a central topic of conversation when discussing equality, diversity, and racism in particular. This is due to the sensitivities within and ever-changing nature of language of which we are all aware. Many attendees to the Equality Training required further support with understanding best practice around terms such as 'BAME', 'Black' and 'minorities'. A practice guide, which could be developed into multiple resources as part of a training course, would benefit many individuals and organisations who are actively trying to improve their approach to working with communities from different backgrounds to themselves.

### **Opportunities for discussion**

Discussions throughout the sessions were key in developing the attendees' understanding of many aspects of inequality. This was also the case for understanding certain terminology around race and equality. For example, the term 'intersectionality' was a new term for some attendees, but is crucial to understanding the multi-faceted experiences faced by each individual. Ensuring discussion is included as part of Equality Training sessions benefits both participants and facilitators.

### **Continued practical support and guidance around equality, diversity and inclusion**

A clear outcome of the evaluation of the training was that staff of VCS organisations require practical support and guidance on ensuring their workplaces and services are inclusive. Although training sessions can provide sufficient information on which to base best practice upon, practical support such as workshops and guidelines are required to supplement this process. Incorporated into these guidelines should be support on operations, inclusiveness, accessibility and methodology, tailored if possible, to each type of organisation.

### **Suitable, experienced facilitators and clear objectives**

Commissioning an experienced, knowledgeable facilitator for sessions and workshops is crucial to providing meaningful and impactful training. Any facilitator delivering training on equality and diversity should have an in-depth understanding of structural inequality, systemic racism, intersectionality and unconscious bias. It is vital that they are able to make connections between various networks in the sector and to successfully execute the required outcomes.

For more information, please contact:

**Race Equality Network**

Grange Interlink Community Centre

Summerville Road

Bradford BD7 1PX

[www.raceequalitynetwork.org.uk](http://www.raceequalitynetwork.org.uk)

(Project Manager, Humma Nizami, [humma@raceequalitynetwork.org.uk](mailto:humma@raceequalitynetwork.org.uk))

**Empowering Minds Consultancy**

114-116 Manningham Lane

Bradford

BD8 7JF

[www.empoweringminds.co.uk](http://www.empoweringminds.co.uk)

(Director, Sofia Mahmood MBE, [sofia@empoweringminds.co.uk](mailto:sofia@empoweringminds.co.uk))