Breaking through the mistrust: increasing ethnically diverse leadership in children's services

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upon Inspiring Leaders

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This report draws on the experience of those working in or with children's services in England, particularly in leadership or management positions.

Acknowledgements

We wish to extend our thanks to everyone across children's services and local authorities who shared their views via our survey and in follow-up interviews. We would also like to thank our report reference group who dedicated their time and efforts to ensuring that this report is holistic, challenging and constructive.

Section 1
Executive summary

Section 1

Executive summary

Key messages from the research

The most prominent finding of our research is that **there is a significant gap between the perception that stakeholders have of what employees from ethnically diverse communities experience in the workplace, compared to the reality of what they live through**. Therefore, there is a need for local authorities and children's services departments to devote local authorities and children's services departments need to devote time and energy to building greater trust between their organisations and employees from ethnically diverse communities. Overwhelmingly, the experiences of people in these groups are that workplaces are not inclusive enough, that processes related to recruitment, selection, promotion, and progression lack fairness and transparency, and that organisations, leaders and white peers are not doing enough to actively promote anti-racism.

A starting point for this is to encourage local authority and children's services leaders to understand the lived experience of those working in their departments. **in order to ensure that any strategies or actions that are implemented are addressing the key concerns of employees from ethnically diverse communities.**

Over

40%

of children's services employees* have seen or experienced racism in their organisation

There is a need to **better embed diversity and inclusion in training programmes and in ongoing everyday conversation in the workplace, particularly in regards to inclusive leadership and anti-racism**. Our findings show that current programmes are not reaching the right people and are not in-depth enough. Similarly, employees from ethnically diverse communities are not hearing race talked about enough in day-to-day interactions with leaders, managers, and peers.

Related to this, we found that leaders now and leaders of the future need to be **equipped to create psychologically safe environments for all employees, and lead conversations and drive change on race**. Our research highlighted that in order for leadership development programmes to be fully fit-for-purpose, they need to endow participants with the capability to be actively anti-racist, regardless of ethnic background. Our research was not able to identify any leadership programmes that currently do this that are not designed specifically for people from ethnically diverse communities.

*Who responded to our survey

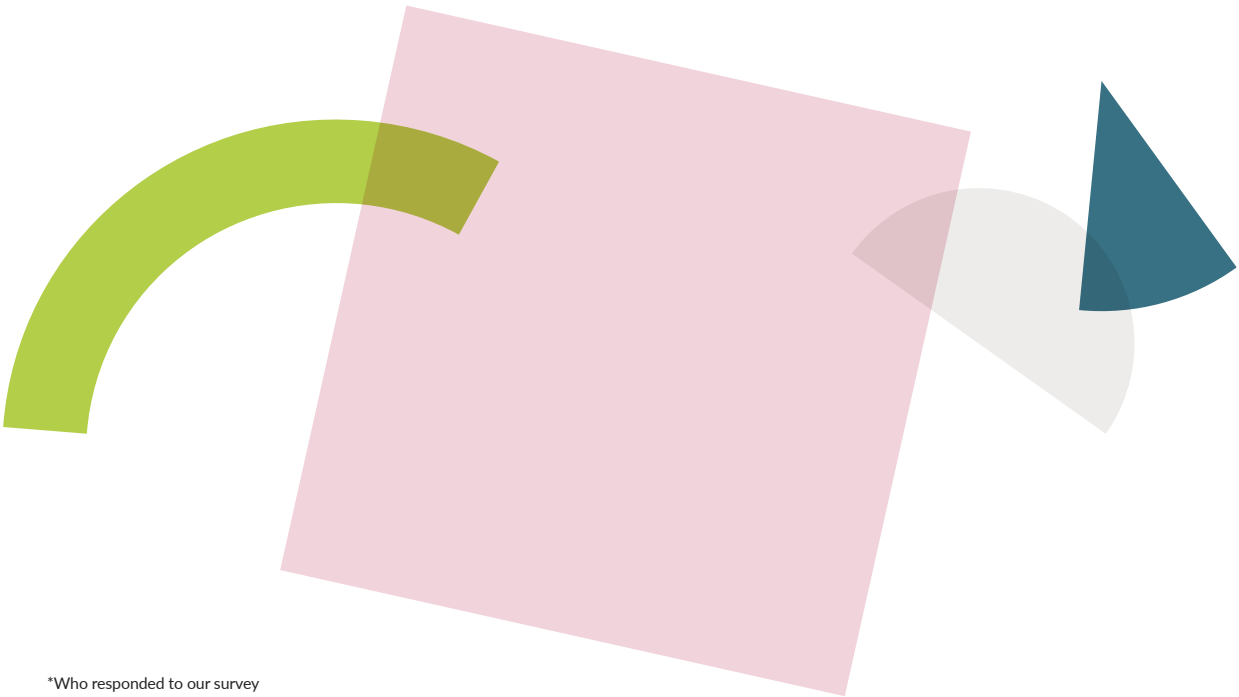
89%

of children's services employees* from ethnically diverse backgrounds do not think promotions are awarded on merit

But leadership development programmes do not work in isolation, and our research also pointed to deeper, more systemic problems in children's services departments. Our research consistently evidences **mistrust of recruitment and selection processes, indicating systemic and process bias that needs to be identified and removed to ensure greater equity across ethnicitie**s. Linked to the lack of trust, people from ethnically diverse communities do not feel that they are given a fair chance to access leadership development opportunities in comparison to their white peers. These opportunities have included a range of local employer and national programmes, and include the Aspirant programme and the upon programme.

This mistrust of selection processes extends to leadership development programmes. Our research found **that people from ethnically diverse communities considered they were less likely to hear about leadership development programmes and less likely to secure a place on them** because of processes that, in the past, have put sponsorship above skills and potential. The message from participants was clear: advertising of all development programmes needs to be targeted to ensure it reaches a wide and ethnically diverse group of aspiring leaders, including aspirant Directors of Children's Services, and processes need to value skills built inside and outside of the workplace as well as potential to develop and become leaders of the future.

Finally, **limited representation of ethnically diverse leaders continues to be a barrier for people from ethnically diverse communities**. We heard this message loud and clear throughout our research: there are not enough senior leaders from ethnically diverse communities in children's services or more broadly across local authorities; and that any leadership development programme that seeks to serve the needs of future leaders from ethnically diverse communities needs to have representation amongst its facilitators and speakers, as well as amongst those developing it.



*Who responded to our survey

Opportunities for action

In amongst all these barriers and the clear message that children's services employees from ethnically diverse backgrounds are still hitting a glass ceiling, there is real potential for positive change.

The results of our research reinforce findings and messages that are being explored and heard across all public sectors and beyond. The messages are not new. But in the wake of the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020 and the increased profile of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK and globally, there is a fresh appetite to ensure that change actually happens. Health inequalities that are experienced by people from ethnically diverse communities, that have been highlighted throughout the COVID-19 pandemic have provided additional impetus[1].

More organisations across the UK (which, as is the case in children's services and local authorities, are majority white) are listening, reflecting and re-educating in order to start a journey to becoming truly anti-racist. More white employees are becoming active allies and challenging their employers to engage with race.

And the barriers that our research has re-emphasised also offer up opportunities. Where there is disconnect between the lived experience of employees from ethnically diverse communities and leadership, there is opportunity to engage and for leaders to listen and learn. Where there is lack of confidence to lead conversations on race, there is the opportunity to empower future leaders and children's services employees alike. Where systemic bias exists, there is opportunity to overhaul processes and traditional approaches in order to create more fair and equitable systems that encourage greater diversity.

What was clear from everyone we engaged with in this research is that we are at a pivotal moment. There is a huge appetite and willingness from employees and leaders to create positive change, and wide acknowledgement, regardless of ethnicity, that change is necessary.

71%

of children's services employees* from ethnically diverse communities feel the need to adjust their behaviours in the workplace so that they fit in

1. Independent Sage
   https://www.independentsage.org/covid-19-and-health-inequality

*Who responded to our survey

Language and terminology used in this document

What about BAME?

It has been widely reported that the use of 'BAME' is obsolete.[2] As an umbrella term, it lacks nuance and ignores the range of experience within it by grouping together a large and diverse group of people. This grouping together creates a perception of a homogenised culture, history, background and lived experience, which isn't the case in reality. BAME has been criticised for setting up 'white' as the norm, othering people from different ethnicities and perpetuating existing systemic racism and bias, and for centring the experiences of two named groups above other ethnicities.

Whilst a number of alternative terms exist, none are perfect. Most (if not all) come with the same baggage as 'BAME' in terms of the tendency to group together a diverse range of groups and people. The political term 'Black' – used to refer to people from African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean communities – has been in use since the 1970s but is criticised for marginalising the voices of British Asian people in particular.[3] 'People of colour' whilst recognised in the UK is used more widely in the US. 'Ethnic minority' or 'minority ethnic' has been criticised because by including 'minority', it places those who are not white in a subordinate position to those in the 'norm' white group.

Throughout this report we have instead opted to refer to **ethnically diverse communities**, which has been shown to be more acceptable by the groups it refers to.[4] Because this – and any – alternative to BAME comes with some of the same challenges, we have also provided a more granular analysis (where sufficient data is available) to understand the different opinions and experiences that exist between different ethnic groups.

For the purposes of this report, ethnically diverse communities refers to anyone who has declared their ethnicity as one of the following:

- Asian or Asian British: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese or any other Asian background
- Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British, or any other Black background
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, or any other mixed or multiple ethnic background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

We acknowledge that the landscape associated with nomenclature is ever shifting and sometimes contentious. There can never be one categorisation that fully captures the challenges, experiences, and successes of one group of people. Whilst it has been necessary for us to group people of different ethnicities together for administrative purposes and to illustrate important points about the barriers they face in the workplace, we are keenly aware that the most perfect solution is to support self-identification. In the context of a report that seeks to offer recommendations for decision-makers, organisations, and other stakeholders, it has been necessary, however, to offer a classification. We have endeavoured to be respectful of the diversity of experience and offer more nuanced analysis wherever there is sufficient data to allow this.

Where BAME is used in this report, it is directly quoting a participant or is citing other research and reports.

2. (a) 'Don't call me BAME: Why some people are rejecting the term' (30 June 2020)
   https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53194376
   (b) "BAME term offends those it attempts to describe, sporting survey finds' (12 November 2020)
   https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2020/nov/12/bame-term-offends-those-it-attempts-to-describe-sporting-survey-finds-sporting-equals
3. Modood, Tariq (1994) 'Political Blackness and British Asians'
   https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/003803859402800400 4
4. Sporting Equals (2020) BAME Terminology Survey Statement
   http://sportingequals.org.uk/news-and-blogs/sporting-equals-bame-terminology-survey-statement.html

Glossary of terms & abbreviations

Anti-racism
The policy or process of opposing racism.

Bias
Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, especially in a way considered to be unfair (see also: unconscious bias).

D&I
Diversity and Inclusion.

DCS
Director of Children's Services.

Diversity
The existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people.

Equality
The state of being equal, especially in status, rights or opportunities.

Equity
Fairness and impartiality.

Inclusion
The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

Lived experience
Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct involvement in everyday events.

Microaggression
A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle or intentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group such as a racial or ethnic minority (also call microincivilities).

Psychologically safe/psychological safety
The ability to express opinions and views without fear of negative consequences.

Racism
Any overt or covert behaviour, system or process which inhibits the opportunity provided to or has a negative impact on an individual based on their race and/or ethnicity.

Sponsorship
The formal or informal support provided to employees by line managers or other more senior employees that enable them to hear about and apply for opportunities to develop skills and/or advance careers.

Stakeholders
As used in this document refers to people operating at levels that have influence over children's services departments without working directly in them on a day-to-day basis, including local authority CEOs and other senior leadership or executive team members, and Elected Members.

Unconscious bias
Bias that happens automatically and is triggered by our brain making judgements at speed based on our background, cultural environment, personal experiences, and other external influences.

White privilege
Inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterised by racial inequality and justice.

Section 2
Methodology and respondents

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Methodology and respondents

This study took place in winter 2020-21, and comprised an initial survey followed by a series of individual interviews. The online survey explored the workplace experiences of individuals who were employed within local authority children's services, or who had some leadership or political responsibility for it. It captured views on the accessibility of leadership development programmes to those within children's services, and how well they serve the leadership aspirations of people from ethnically diverse communities.

The survey sought to establish:

- How diverse and inclusive children's services workplaces were perceived to be.
- How easy individuals working in children's services found it to access development opportunities.
- How embedded anti-racism and broader diversity and inclusion objectives were in the training programmes and workplace operations and conversation.
- Views on accessibility, equity, and relevancy of current leadership development opportunities.

The survey targeted employees of children's services departments including those operating at DCS level, other senior and executive leaders, local authority Chief Executives, and Elected Members. The survey was initially circulated to 638 individuals who were then asked to circulate this to other relevant people in their networks. All were asked to complete the survey themselves, and also encouraged to circulate it to wider communities within children's services.

In total, 173 individuals contributed, 12 of whom participated in follow-up interviews to add depth to the insights gained.

Fig 1 | Role of survey respondents

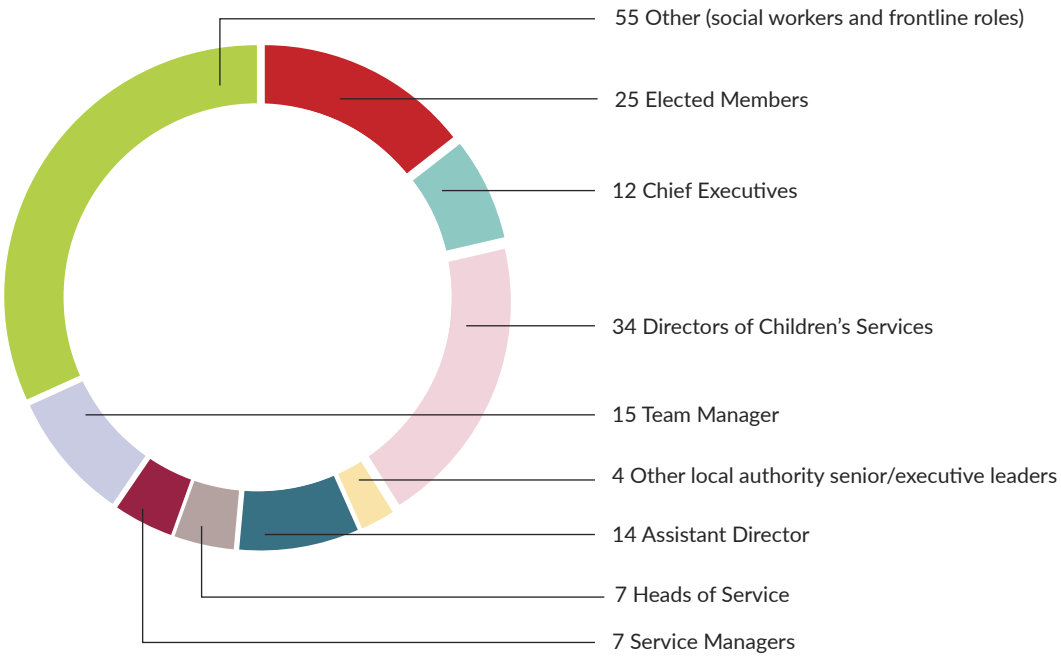


Fig. 1 shows the roles of those who responded to the survey. Throughout this report, we refer to stakeholders. To clarify, this refers to people who were not employed within children's services, including the following groups (which are separated out in the figure above):

- Elected Members
- Chief Executives
- Other local authority senior/executive leaders not in children's services roles

Of those employed within children's services departments (and not including those already in the role of DCS), 30 actively aspired to the role. 17 of these individuals were at team manager level or above. 63 individuals did not aspire to the position (18 at team manager level or above). A range of reasons were given for this, themed as follows (in order of popularity, most popular first):

- Too late in career/age-related
- Feel unqualified/as if it is beyond personal capabilities
- Would miss direct work with young people
- Happy in current role
- Not attracted to the red tape, bureaucracy, stress and pressure of the role/too political

We were particularly keen to include the views of those who do not currently actively aspire to the role of DCS, as this aspiration can be fluid and their views provide valuable insight into the barriers they perceive exist in children's services. Those who feel that they are too late in their career may once have aspired to the role, for example, and investigating the views of those who do not actively aspire to a leadership position has helped to shape this report – the barriers that exist in the workplace can often contribute to the feeling that a senior leadership role is not for them.

Fig. 2 shows that the survey generated responses from a relatively even spread of employees and other stakeholders from different types of local authority.

Fig 2 | Place of work

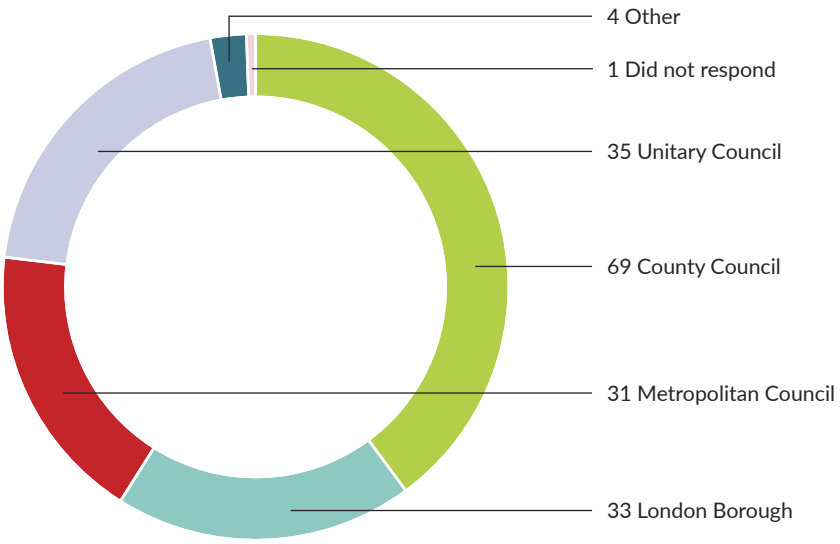
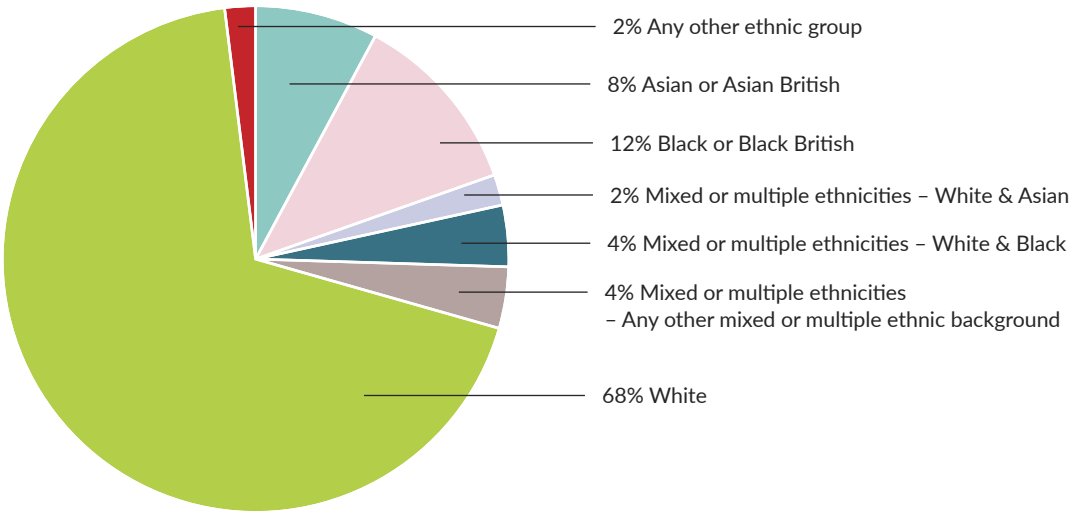


Fig 3 | Participants who disclosed their ethnicity (n=101)



One of the key lines of enquiry of this project was to determine how the experiences of those from ethnically diverse communities compared to those from white backgrounds. 58.4% (101 out of 173) of respondents chose to disclose their ethnic group, and a breakdown of these groupings is shown in Fig 3.

Fig 4 | Children's services employees including DCS who disclosed their ethnicity (n=76)

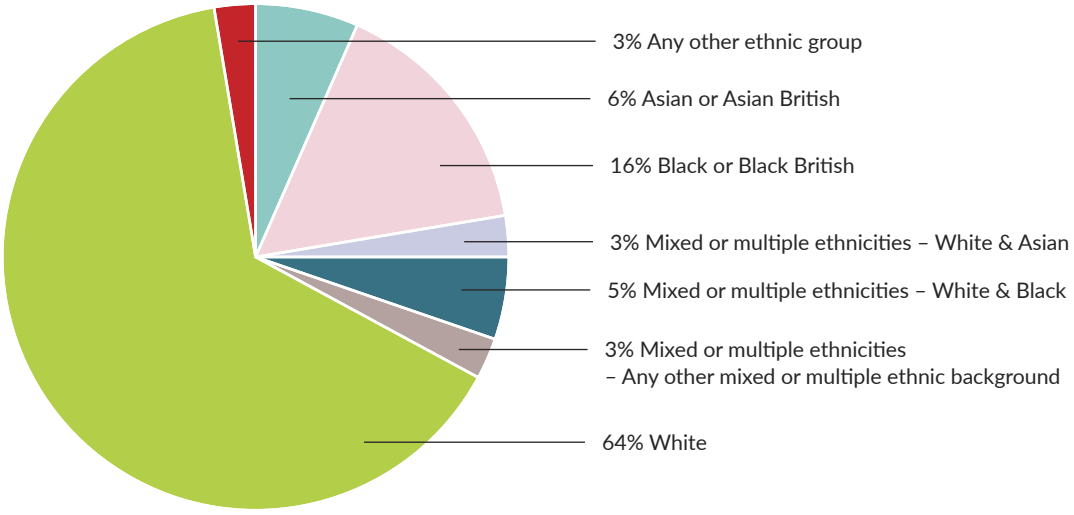
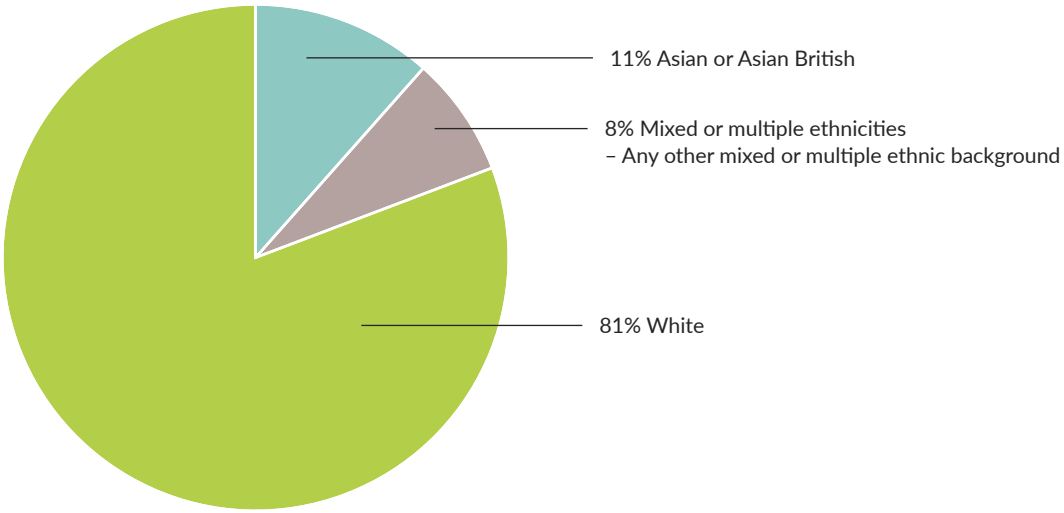


Fig 5 | Stakeholders who disclosed their ethnicity (n=25)



As shown in Fig. 3, 4 and 5, our own response rates compare to the ethnicity breakdown of social workers employed by local authorities in England as reported by the UK Government[5] in July 2019 – 79% of children and family social workers are white compared to 68% of respondents to our survey. This report, and our own survey, looks more broadly at local authority children's services departments, but in the absence of any readily available ethnicity statistics for the whole children's services workforce, we have used these statistics as a proxy. Given the reliance of this research project on hearing about the workplace experiences of people from ethnically diverse communities, it is positive that the proportion of ethnically diverse respondents to our survey is higher than the proportion of ethnically diverse social workers. Perhaps not surprisingly given the lack of ethnically diverse representation at senior levels in organisations across the UK[6], the diversity of the stakeholder group is much lower.

Overall, the number of responses breaks down as follows:

- Number of white employees: 48
- Number of ethnically diverse employees: 28
- Number of 'unknown' employees: 54
- Number of white stakeholders: 20
- Number of ethnically diverse stakeholders: 5
- Number of 'unknown' stakeholders: 17

Overall, 59% of respondents disclosed their ethnicity. Whilst this still provides adequate data to support the findings of this report, it is important to recognise that this level of non-disclosure is not uncommon in this area, and is often considered to be symptomatic of respondents' lack of trust in systems or processes, or in how data might be used to identify individuals.[7]

5. ONS (2021) Social workers for children and families
https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/social-workers-for-children-and-families/latest#:~:text=71.7%25%20of%20child%20and%20family,ethnic%20group%20after%20White%20British
6. The McGregor-Smith Review: Race in the Workplace
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf
7. CBI
https://www.cbi.org.uk/articles/closing-the-pay-gap-improve-ethnicity-disclosure-with-a-culture-of-trust

Survey design

The survey was used to test out initial lines of enquiry and assumptions based on an earlier literature review, and an overview of that literature is included in Appendix A. Based on that review, we developed hypotheses that informed the design of the survey and follow-up interviews in order to test our thinking:

- That systemic barriers exist in the workplace that are hindering people from ethnically diverse communities from reaching the most senior levels of children's services, in particular through lack of access to career development and progression opportunities.
- That leadership development programmes can and should play a key role in diversifying the talent pipeline for those senior levels.
- That leadership development programmes should not be a stand-alone solution to increasing diversity but should operate in partnership with approaches in the workplace that seek to create more inclusive environments.

The survey was developed by GatenbySanderson with input and feedback from the Associate Director at the Institute of Public Care, Oxford Brookes University. Several associates at the Staff College acted as advisors, who were able to provide additional insights from their previous experience of shaping leadership development programmes, as well as their lived experience as individuals from ethnically diverse communities.

In-depth interviews

Following the survey, a subset of 12 individuals were contacted for follow-up interviews. These individuals identified themselves as open to further discussion in the survey and came from a range of different ethnicities. Interviews were designed to add greater depth and nuance to the findings generated by the survey. In order to ensure a range of opinions were heard, interviewees also operated at different levels within children's services including Cabinet Members, DCS, Team Manager, Assistant Head of Service, Service Manager and Social Worker/Principal Social Worker.

These individuals not only indicated their willingness to provide greater insight in this way but had given considered and thorough answers throughout their surveys. All were able to provide insights based on their career and workplace experiences.

The interviews explored the significance of any barriers faced by individuals as they have built their careers, any discrimination and racism that individuals have faced, their perceptions of how committed their workplaces are to diversity, inclusion and anti-racism, and the accessibility of and content required for leadership development programmes.

All survey and interview questions can be viewed in Appendix B.

Impact and reach

Survey respondents and interviewees were well engaged with the subject matter and spoke of its importance in the current global context, in which many organisations are reflecting on their own practices and starting the journey to becoming truly anti-racist. Since summer 2020, there has been increased engagement with race issues globally due to the murder of George Floyd, which has escalated tension in the UK, and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Additionally, a spotlight has been shone on the health inequalities faced by people from ethnically diverse communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and this has created additional engagement with the broader agenda. Whilst it is difficult to quantify, we do believe that these issues and events have been a contributing factor to the engagement with our research and the perspectives we have heard. With a representative spread of ethnicities taking part, we have been able to credibly investigate the opinions and experiences of people from ethnically diverse communities in order to inform leadership development solutions and equip strategic managers and leaders with the tools needed to support the development of truly inclusive, anti-racist workplace cultures.

Section 3
Understanding workplace cultures and building trust

Section 3

Understanding workplace cultures and building trust

3.1
Perceptions of inclusive cultures in children's services workplaces

Whereas children's services employees were asked to tell us of their own workplace experiences, stakeholders were asked what their perception was of the culture of children's services departments. As is highlighted throughout this report, the stakeholder view of what was being experienced within children's services did not match the view of those employed within children's services.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) defines inclusion as "the extent to which everyone at work, regardless of their background, identity or circumstance, feels valued, accepted and supported to succeed at work".[8] In other words, people who work in inclusive cultures feel a sense of belonging; they feel able to bring their authentic selves to work.

54% of stakeholders and 51% of white employees consider their organisations to be highly or somewhat inclusive compared to just 21% of those from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Employees from ethnically diverse communities were also more likely than other groups to hold critical views of the extent to which workplaces are inclusive of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. 21.4% of people from ethnically diverse communities found their work environment not very or not at all inclusive, compared to 16.7% of their white peers who felt this way and just 7% of stakeholders.

A more detailed look at the experience of different ethnically diverse groups indicates that people who identify as Asian or Asian British were most likely to question how inclusive their workplace cultures were. 40% of respondents from this group found their children's services workplace not at all or not very inclusive, compared to 23.1% of respondents who declared their ethnicity as Black/Black British and 12.5% of the respondents who came from a mixed or multiple ethnic background.

Fig 6 | How inclusive are children's services workplaces of people from ethnically diverse communities?

8. CIPD (2019) Building Inclusive Workplaces: assessing the evidence
https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/building-inclusive-workplaces-report-sept-2019_tcm18-64154.pdf

The stark differences in views from those, who as stakeholders, have more power to effect change for ethnically diverse employees, brings into sharp relief the reality gap that needs to be addressed in order to tackle racism.

Key insight

Regularly measuring how inclusive people feel their workplaces are – including the ability to break responses down by ethnicity – is crucial to ensuring that culture change initiatives are directed appropriately and have an impact in the most important areas.

These findings – that people from ethnically diverse communities have a more negative experience of workplace cultures than their white peers – echo the findings from our literature review, though with less differentiation between groups than our own survey uncovered. The CIPD's 2017 report into barriers to career progression experienced by people from ethnically diverse backgrounds found that 43% of people from ethnically diverse communities felt that their workplace did not have an inclusive culture, with people from Asian backgrounds most likely to feel this way (48%)[9], compared to 41% of white respondents.

A key measure of the extent to which people feel they belong at work is in understanding the extent to which people feel they need to adapt their behaviours in the workplace in order to be accepted.

Our survey revealed that 71.4% of children's services employees from ethnically diverse communities felt that they need to change their behaviours more than a little in order for this to be the case, compared to just 25% of their white peers.

Fig 7 | The extent to which people have to change their behaviours at work

9. CIPD (2017) Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top
https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/addressing-the-barriers-to-BAME-employee-career-progression-to-the-top_tcm18-33336.pdf

The need to adapt behaviours in the workplace is recognised as an example of micro-aggressions – behaviours or environments that signal to members of minority groups that they do not belong. This lack of a sense of belonging has a wider impact on people's feeling of wellbeing and, in turn, their performance in role:[10] The attention and focus needed by people to adapt their behaviours, or to deal with the ambiguity of these microincivilities brings with it the potential for greater harm. For example, when an individual's focus and attention is elsewhere, this can create the perception that an individual is inattentive to their work.

Similarly, by channelling efforts into consistently adjusting behaviours so that others don't have negative perceptions, less energy is available to give to their job or to pursue development and progression opportunities. These small and constant adjustments to behaviours or appearance are also symptomatic of a society in which white people have shaped the dominant culture and tend only to accept those from ethnically diverse communities if they have somehow assimilated themselves into that. This was raised regularly by survey respondents and interviewees and will be touched on again later in this report.

Respondent comments suggest there is a lack of understanding amongst stakeholders as to what adapting behaviours actually means for people from ethnically diverse communities. Comments from individuals – particularly who identified as Black or Black British women – focused on how they asserted themselves, how they physically presented themselves (especially with regards to their hair), or how much harder they had to work in order to be recognised.

I am probably less assertive as I do not want to come across as angry Black woman.

(Black woman)

Generally, over the years, I have had to conceal my ethnicity or allow people to use a shortened version of my name, purely because they cannot be bothered to say my name properly.

(Asian man)

Not to come across as aggressive when simply making a challenge. Responding to colleagues so as not to be seen as bullying/dominant/'difficult to work with' and other stereotypes of black women!

(Black woman)

As a black woman I have had to adjust my behaviour in order to manage the perceptions and stereotypes held by others. If I have questioned and or challenged a review I was then labelled as being difficult and or obstructive. As a result of this I have refrained from offering an opinion or view, but this has led to being overlooked so therefore has had a negative impact.

(Black woman)

I feel I have had to be careful about how I wear my hair due to comments made by colleagues. I have to try to speak in a softer voice. I have to be very careful on how I challenge so I am not perceived as aggressive. Feeling like I have to work longer hours, offer to cover for others, volunteer more often.

(Black woman)

10. Pearn Kandola (2020) The role leaders have in promoting wellbeing and addressing micro-incivilities
https://pearnkandola.com/diversity-and-inclusion-hub/leadership/the-role-leaders-have-in-promoting-wellbeing-and-addressing-micro-incivilities/

Though few comments were made by stakeholders, those that were tended to minimise the implication of these behavioural changes and adjustments for people from ethnically diverse communities:

Everyone, regardless of race or gender needs to moderate their behaviour in the workplace, this doesn't mean that you are supressed in any way - it is just behaving appropriately.

(Gender and ethnicity not disclosed)

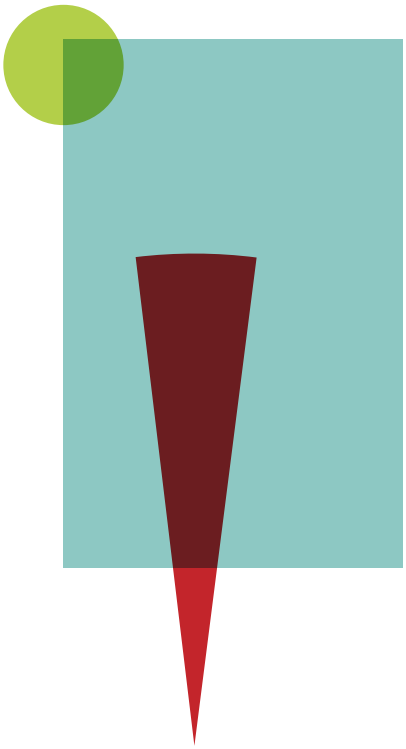
Like all people (I believe) I change the way I talk at work. I use less slang terms and swear less.

(Gender and ethnicity not disclosed)

Key insight

Ensuring leaders understand how privilege affects their experiences, the way they view the world, the opportunities available to them and how easy those opportunities are to pursue is vital to building inclusive workplaces where everyone can thrive. Combined with an approach that builds understanding of the links between ethnicity, workplace wellbeing and sense of belonging, and the impact this has on an individual's performance and progression, will allow leaders to actively embed inclusion into the way they lead and the cultures they build.

These views outlined above from some stakeholders are indicative of a lack of understanding of what white privilege means for people who possess it. White privilege is defined as "the inherent advantages possessed by a white person on the basis of their race in a society characterised by racial inequality and justice",[11] ensuring that leaders and future leaders from white backgrounds understand how it shapes their experiences and how it can be used as a force for promoting anti-racism is vital to removing systemic bias from workplaces.

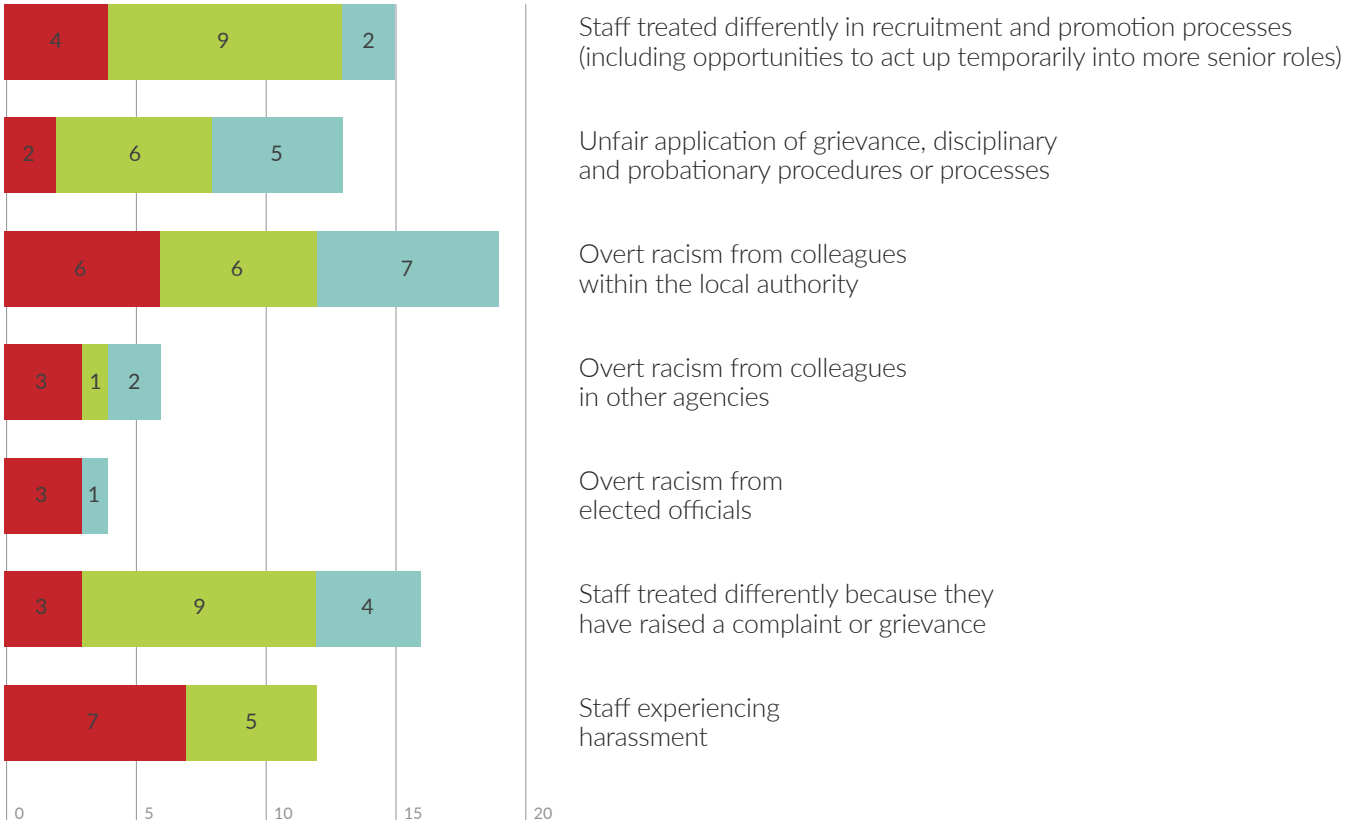


11. Lexico definition of white privilege (accessed 5 March 2021) https://www.lexico.com/definition/white_privilege

3.2
Tackling racism and raising awareness of the race agenda through effective training and workplace discourse.

To help organisations tackle racism, we asked respondents to indicate what their experiences were, or what they had witnessed in the workplace (Fig. 8).

Fig 8 | Experiencing and witnessing racism



40% of respondents working in children's services have experienced or seen others experience racism in their organisation (compared with just 21.9% of stakeholders). Employees most commonly report this as experiencing or witnessing overt racism from colleagues within the local authority.

Other comments pointed to the prevalence of unconscious bias and racism from service users as two specific areas of concern.

Whilst almost all respondents (91%) reported that their organisations provided diversity & inclusion training, only 29% graded it as relatively or very effective.

Beyond formal training sessions, evidence gathered from interviews suggests that a significant number of local authorities have employee groups set up for ethnically diverse communities, though how much influence they are given varies widely according to those interviewees we spoke with. Only 14% of respondents were aware of a reverse mentoring scheme dedicated to race and ethnicity being active in their organisation.

Multiple training opportunities are one thing; the right people accessing them is another.

(Mixed/multiple ethnic man)

Diversity training has only very recently been made a priority. Does not come across as genuine. Occasional emails and assigning a 'diversity leader'. A lot of meetings but nothing seems to come from it with little actual changes seen within the workplace.

(Black woman)

Much of the training is "opt in" and the colleagues who choose to take this training are very much already aware of these issues. There is a very tick box approach and policy and procedure approach to E&D issues and inclusivity.

(White man)

Not mandatory, not wide enough, not often enough, diversity issues not routinely addressed in all training.

(White man)

The training is very good but getting the right people to attend the training can be challenging. Also, it takes real leadership to keep setting the standard of expectations on this and continuing to press for action on inequalities.

(Gender and ethnicity not disclosed)

These comments, and others like them, support the view that training sessions as standalone solutions without any evaluation or links to ongoing conversations were not seen as effective by survey respondents. In our experience as providers of learning & development across the public sector, sessions used as a tool to build foundational understanding of issues and start conversations are more likely to have a long-lasting impact than sessions which are designed to be attended as one-off interventions. Our literature review also showed that diversity training solutions as part of a broader, multi-pronged programme is likely to be far more successful than any lone solution.[12] Training also needs to reach the right people, and non-mandated sessions will tend to only attract those who are already open to the sometimes hard to hear messages that are being relayed in any diversity-related session.[13] And finally, any diversity and inclusion-specific training will be ineffective if its messages are not also embedded in other training and internal communications.

12. Harvard Business Review (2019) Does Diversity Training Work the Way It's Supposed To? (9 July 2019) https://hbr.org/2019/07/does-diversity-training-work-the-way-its-supposed-to
13. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) Unconscious bias training: An assessment of the evidence for effectiveness https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/research-report-113-unconcious-bais-training-an-assessment-of-the-evidence-for-effectiveness-pdf.pdf

3.3
Focusing on fairness and transparency in recruitment and selection

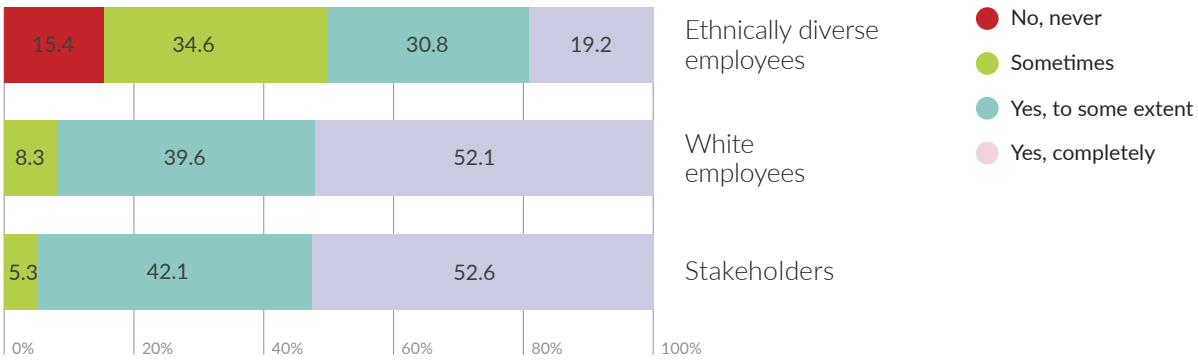
Throughout the survey and subsequent interviews, there was a perception of unfairness in recruitment and selection process associated with more senior roles. In particular, there was a view especially from employees from ethnically diverse communities that people are selected for promotion and receive informal sponsorship from managers and senior leaders.

As shown in Fig 8 above, for survey respondents from ethnically diverse communities, staff being treated differently in recruitment and promotion processes was the most commonly experienced or witnessed form of racism in the workplace (equal to staff being treated differently because they had raised a grievance or complaint). Despite claims of meritocracy, only 11.1% of ethnically diverse respondents felt that people in children's services get promoted on the basis of merit to a good or great extent.

Many senior leadership positions are handled by executive search agencies, who have a key role to play in ensuring that job descriptions are written inclusively and that job opportunities reach a diverse range of qualified potential applicants.

Our literature review backs up these findings and suggests a number of ways that executive search agencies and HR teams can implement to ensure fair, transparent and equitable recruitment and selection processes.

Fig 9 | How comfortable people feel starting a conversation about race, ethnicity and culture



Whilst most people feel comfortable at least some of the time to start a conversation about race, ethnicity and cultural difference in their workplace, there is a stark difference in the levels of comfort felt by white people compared to employees from ethnically diverse communities. This indicates that white people overall feel they are in a more psychologically safe environment, even when raising difficult topics. Comments provided shed some light on why this may be:

When you are BAME, you can never really do anything 'safely' as the slightest question or challenging a situation can lead to an avalanche of negative comments between senior managers, which then breeds a false negative image which makes it harder for us to get an equal platform, let alone to actually progress.

(Asian woman)

The issues around race are often sidelined, so it is difficult to raise for fear of being targeted.

(Asian woman)

You have to be very selective about who you can have these conversations with, or risk becoming 'the angry/difficult Black woman'.

(Black woman)

The conversations are minimal as people from white backgrounds become uncomfortable and are not sure what to do or say, or even know how they should feel or act.

(Black woman)

I feel that if you mention race, colleagues and managers immediately become defensive. I think there is a general unspoken feeling that if you raise race as an issue, you will be seen as a troublemaker.

(Mixed/multiple ethnicity - Black/White woman)

As the only BAME manager, it is left down to myself to bring these issues up as the other Team Managers will not start a conversation around this and one manager in particular is very defensive… which makes it difficult to discuss in an open way.

(Mixed/multiple ethnicity - Black/White woman)

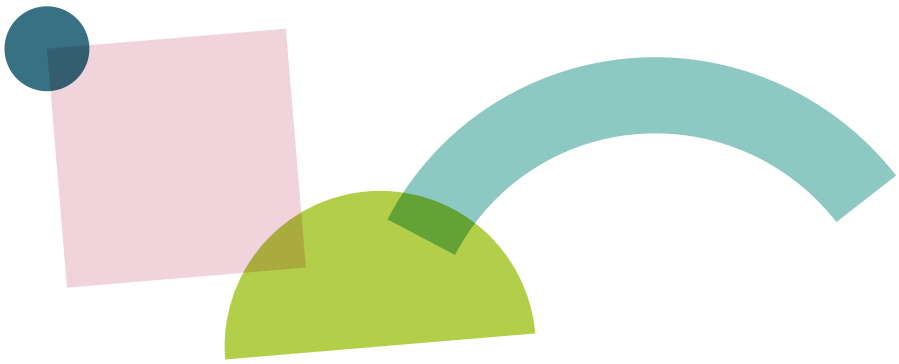


Fig 10 | Are white people in your organisations allies in tackling racism and discrimination, and encouraging a diverse and inclusive culture?

When asked whether white people are active allies in tackling racism and discrimination, and encouraging a diverse and inclusive culture, there is again a significant difference of opinion between employees from ethnically diverse communities, white employees and stakeholders.

White people think that they and their peers are being strong allies, but this is not always being seen by those from ethnically diverse communities. Again, the perception of stakeholders is incongruent with the perception on the ground, with 57.9% saying that white people are allies to a considerable or great extent. A staggering 76.9% of employees from ethnically diverse groups do not believe that white people in their organisations are allies in these areas.

Key insight
Employees from ethnically diverse communities lack trust in promotion processes and in their white peers and leaders when it comes to active allyship. Creating psychologically safe spaces in which people can actively challenge existing structures and in which people feel like their voice will be heard will enable all children's services employees to feel that they can play a role in creating anti-racist workplaces and practices.

I have not had a single one of the senior leadership or management from the white diaspora lead conversations about this aspect. Generally, there is often an unrealistic expectation for BAME staff to lead the conversation.
(Asian man)

Those that identify as allies participate and encourage others towards being inclusive, but others do not automatically participate in the endeavour.
(Black man)

When attempts are made to have these discussions, it turns into a discussion about how they are not racist.
(Black woman)

A very low percentage of white staff members have become allies in tackling racism and discrimination in the workplace.
(Black man)

The leadership is raising issues on diversity… but the leadership is still predominantly white, so it does not always seem to be reflective of what it proposes.

(Black woman)

There is still an over reliance on Black colleagues sharing their experiences and leading the discussions about racism. There is a lack of understanding of white privilege and of the difference between being anti-racist and not a racist.

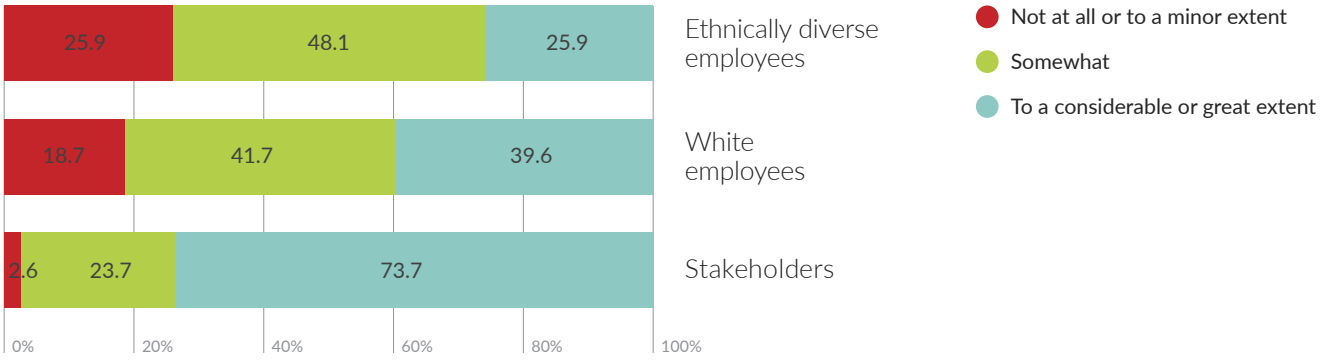
(White woman)

I feel that BAME staff are having to 'educate' white members of staff, some who are willing to learn, some who are not, and some where it feels very tokenistic and disingenuous.

(Mixed/multiple ethnicity - Black/White woman)

Whilst there appears to be no correlation between ethnicity and feelings of personal influence over change overall, there does seem to be somewhat of a lack of confidence across the board, with only 20.8% of employees indicating they feel able to influence change to a great or considerable extent. This rises to 73.7% among stakeholders. As we will see later in this report, it appears that individuals are not using this influence to drive the change they feel they have the power to effect.

Fig 11 | To what extent do people feel they can influence change on race and ethnicity issues?



3.4
Building trust

Fig 12 | Do people in children's services progress/get promoted on the basis of merit?

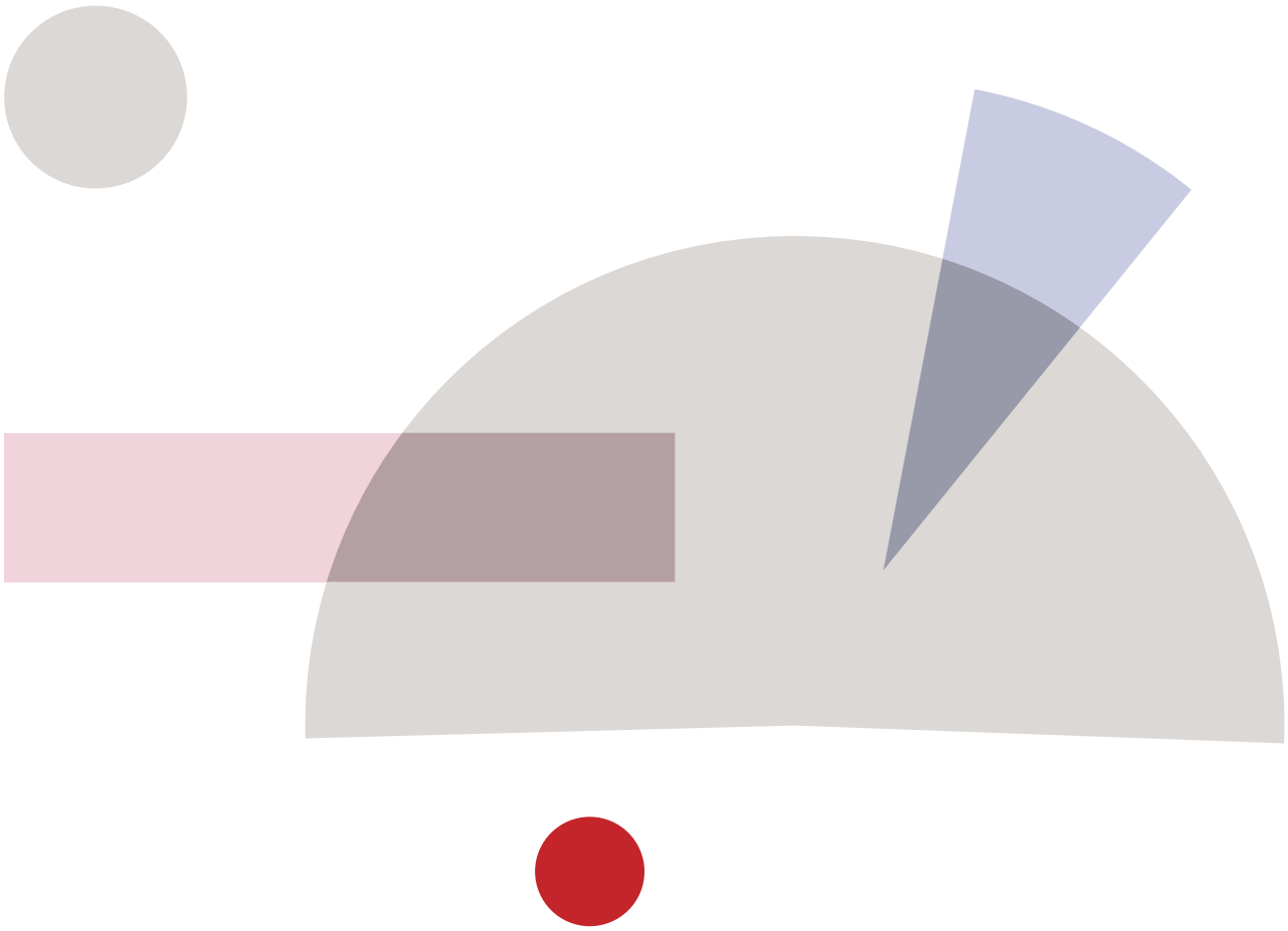
Perhaps the starkest of all differences is in how meritocratic people perceive processes for progression and promotion to be. As shown in Fig.12, employees from ethnically diverse communities are much less likely to agree that people in children's services progress/get promoted on the basis of merit than their white counterparts. Additionally, this is another example of the gap between the perception of stakeholders and the experiences of employees from ethnically diverse communities. Whilst only 11.1% of ethnically diverse employees agree that people in children's services progress/get promoted on the basis of merit to a good or great extent, 88.2% of stakeholders feel that this is the case.

It is worth considering this in light of the limited amount of ethnically diverse representation seen at the upper tiers of organisations. Whilst the vast majority of white respondents (91.5%) could identify a role model with similar lived experiences to their own at senior levels, just 63% of respondents from ethnically diverse communities could do the same.

Key insight

The potential for bias and discrimination to exist in recruitment, selection and promotion processes particularly hinders those from ethnically diverse communities from realising their career ambitions. Whilst not explicitly explored in our survey these processes are intrinsically linked to the full employee lifecycle, so views and experiences of diversity and inclusion should be considered throughout all employee engagement activities (e.g. employee engagement surveys, exit interviews, employee resource group/affinity group feedback)

Section 4
Accessing leadership development programmes and developing skills



Section 4

Accessing leadership development programmes and developing skills

4.1
Knowing about and accessing leadership development programmes

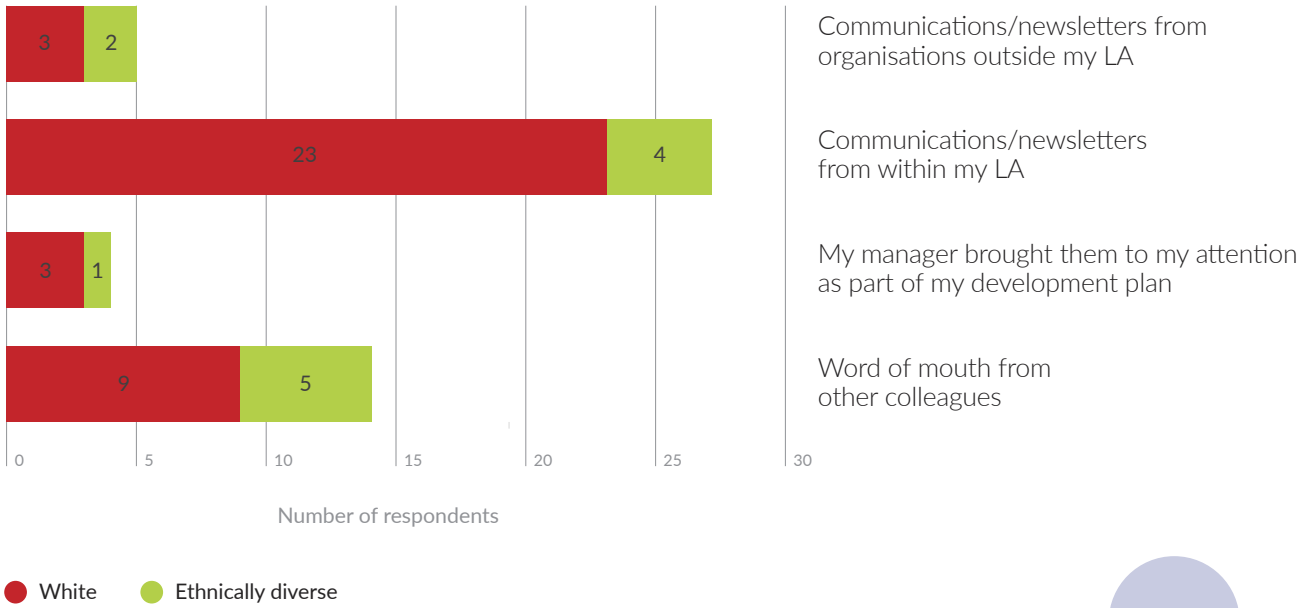
Just over half of all respondents are aware of talent/leadership development programmes operating within their local authority, but white respondents are much more likely to be aware of these programmes than those from ethnically diverse communities: just 23.1% of this group are aware of them.

Once again, there is a disconnect here between what stakeholders believe is happening in children's services departments, and the lived experience of employees; only 6% of stakeholders felt that people were not aware or only had a limited awareness of leadership development programmes.

Further investigation of how employees are finding out about these opportunities sheds some light on why this might be (Fig. 13).

Overwhelmingly, people are far more likely to hear about opportunities through internal newsletters and communications. There are a few points to unpick here, particularly with regards to the role of the line manager in making people aware of these programmes and supporting them to take advantage of them. Whilst the number of people hearing about opportunities in this way is relatively low, we can assume that this method holds more power as the implication is that by raising an opportunity for development with an individual, a manager would support them to take advantage of it.

Fig 13 | Hearing about leadership development opportunities



Survey respondents and interviewees reported that individual unconscious bias is inherent in how managers select team members to put forward for these opportunities. As one interview participant remarked:

[People who are sent the information about leadership development programmes] do not cascade it down enough. Even when it is cascaded down, it usually goes to the Heads of Service, who will only share the information with who they want to share the information with; they've cherry-picked who they wanted to see go.

(Black African woman – Service Manager)

The challenges with this approach – of managers telling people about these programmes – links back to the more negative workplace experiences that those from ethnically diverse backgrounds have, as outlined in the previous section. Further exploration of these issues in interviews revealed that these experiences almost always result in challenging and unsupportive relationships with line managers, often to the point that the individual moves roles or to another local authority.

Second, there are often challenges around funding for these programmes. Speaking of one such opportunity that was offered to her team in late-2019, one (recently) former DCS said:

There was an aspiring DCS programme when I was a DCS, and I've got a team that I've developed over two-and-a-bit years. They were all phenomenal. They all would have been Directors of Children's Services. One is currently in an Acting [DCS] role. And I was only allowed one place, and I wanted all six to do it… and it was one place funded and they wouldn't allow any more than one person from each authority. And it was nothing about their skill set, their experience, what they've got to offer. It was this false framework of rules.

(White woman – former DCS)

Further exploration suggests that the main provider of aspirant DCS leadership development training does not in fact limit places to one per local authority, but the fact that this perception exists is – in itself – a barrier. Additional investigation with provider organisations about funding models for leadership development programmes reveals that places were paid for by local authorities. Therefore, the number of places being offered on any particular programme at any one time was a decision made by individual authorities, and not by any central funding agency or organisation. Each local authority will make decisions based not just on affordability in terms of cost, but on how possible it was to have more than one person out of the office at any one time.

Whilst this particular programme saw local authorities decide how to apply funding, there is a need to ensure that everyone involved is confident in the allocation of places and that local authorities take a planned approach to ensuring that all potential leaders access development, over a period of time.

When combined with the fact that ethnic diversity differs across the UK depending on location (for example, 40.1% of the London population came from an ethnically diverse background according to the 2011 census compared to just 3.7% of those living in Gateshead) even a perceived policy of funding one place per local authority could be seen to impede the number of ethnically diverse candidates for the programme, because it is likely that – at best – employee populations will reflect the broader local population.

We explored this area further with interviewees, asking them how best to ensure that the opportunity presented by a leadership development programme reaches ethnically diverse communities. All of those from Black and Asian communities that we spoke to suggested working with the employee groups linked to race, ethnicity, culture and/or anti-racism that exist within children's services departments, and in local authorities more broadly. This approach is borne out by the survey data that suggests that word of mouth from colleagues is one of the most important ways for people from ethnically diverse communities to hear about these opportunities.

Key insight
Employees from ethnically diverse communities rely heavily on their peer networks for information about development opportunities, and organisations seeking to target any activity to these groups should seek to work with existing networks to capitalise on this.

Fig 14 | The extent to which individuals feel there is a fair and transparent process for people to be selected to participate in leadership development programmes

Our survey also showed a lack of trust amongst those from ethnically diverse communities that there is a fair and transparent process for how people are selected to participate in these programmes. The vast majority of white respondents (87.2%) and stakeholders (96.8%) felt that there was a noticeable amount of fairness and transparency in the process, compared to less than half (47.8%) of respondents from ethnically diverse communities.

When asked what limitations people face with regards to accessing career development opportunities, the insights given by those from ethnically diverse backgrounds make for uncomfortable reading:

BAME members of staff appear to be marginalised which is in contrast to white colleagues whose flaws are overlooked and support offered in excess.

(Asian woman)

Over the years I have seen colleagues with whom I graduated progress much faster than me, these have been white British colleagues.

(Asian man)

I do not feel that my face would fit.

(White and Black Caribbean woman)

Within my current organisation and others I have worked in, there are often ethnic minorities at middle management. However, it is extremely rare at senior management level even when the local authority consists of mainly ethnic minorities.

(Black woman)

I am aware that other Heads of Service have been offered/put forward to attend peer/leadership programmes, but this was not offered or explored with me as an option for my development. I feel that I am often overlooked in favour of other colleagues.

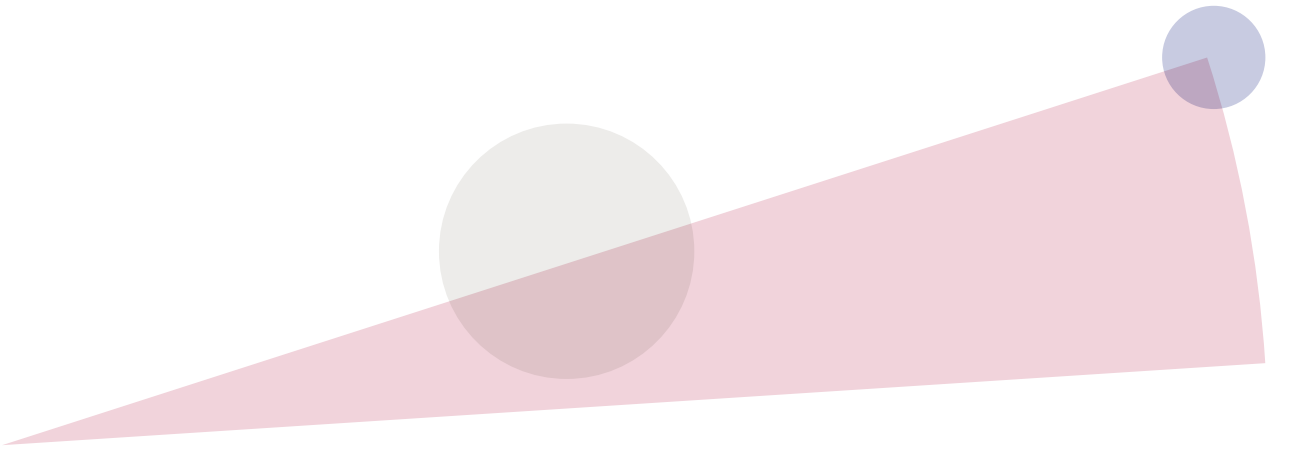
(Black woman)

Unconscious bias and lack of support for the BAME and anti-racism groups are a large issue.

(Black man)

As a locum this creates a huge barrier, but even when I was permanent for 19 years, I still faced barriers to progression, so I feel there is little point.

(Black woman)



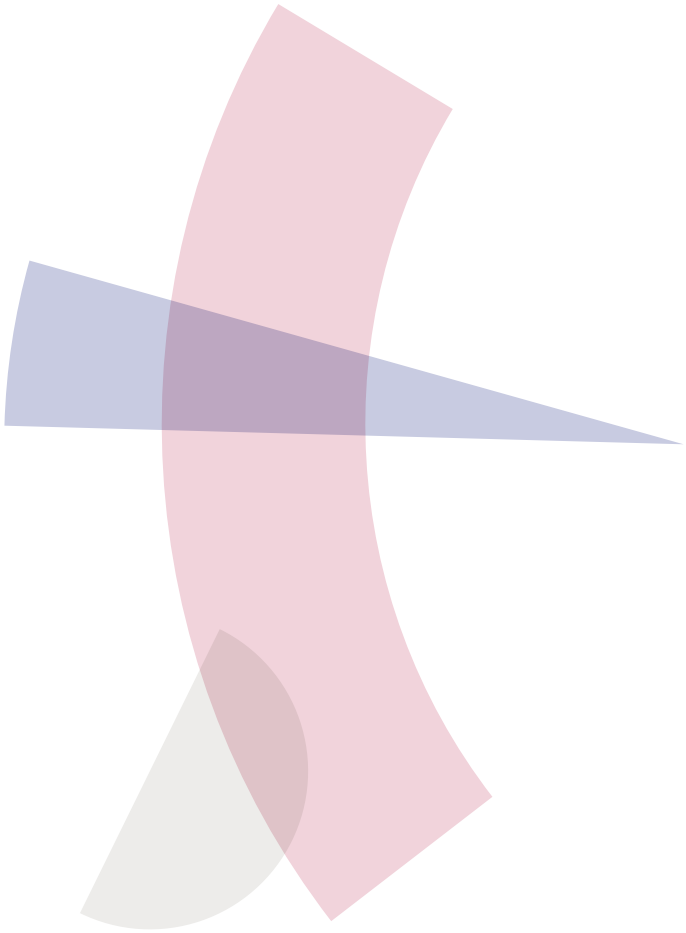
4.2
Developing skills outside of the workplace

Of course, not all skills are developed inside the workplace, and research shows that volunteering levels are "higher in every age group in the BAME population".[14] In particular, individuals from ethnically diverse communities are 16% more likely to volunteer for causes supporting children and young people, and 10% more likely to volunteer in religious organisations or refugee and asylum seeker organisations".[15] For this reason, we explored people's perceptions of how valued by local authority employers any leadership skills developed in this way are.

Key insight
The ways in which people from ethnically diverse communities are developing leadership skills outside the workplace are less valued than the ways in which their white peers are developing leadership skills outside the workplace.

Our survey found that those from ethnically diverse communities are most likely to develop these skills through roles with religious organisations: 71.4% of survey respondents who developed leadership skills in religious organisations came from ethnically diverse communities. In comparison, people from ethnically diverse communities made up just 42.9% of people who developed skills through self- or employer-funded external learning and 40.7% of those who developed leadership skills through roles in charity or voluntary organisations.

When asked whether employers valued the leadership skills that have been developed outside the workplace when making hiring, promotion or progression decisions, respondents from ethnically diverse communities were much more likely to say no, making up a much larger proportion (75%) of this group than those who said yes (where they made up just 16.7% of the group). They also made up a significant proportion of the group who were unsure of how valued these skills were (37.5%).



14. NFP Synergy (2020) New research: the UK's BAME population is likely to be at the heart of the coronavirus volunteer response https://nfpsynergy.net/blog/bame-population-charity-engagement (16 April 2020)
15. Ibid.

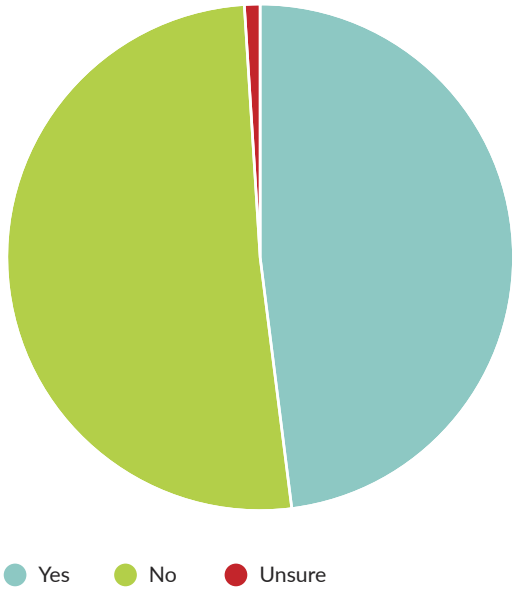
4.3
Supporting career progression and skills development outside of leadership programmes

Whilst there is a relatively even split between positive and negative views on whether there are barriers in the way to promotion within children's services (Fig 15), there is considerable difference in the ethnic makeup of respondents. People from ethnically diverse backgrounds make up just 15.6% (5 out of 32 respondents who declared their ethnicity) of those who do not feel that there are any barriers in their way to promotion and 52.4% (22 out of 42 respondents who declared their ethnicity) of those that do.

62.1% of stakeholders do not think there are any barriers in the way of promotion within children's services.

When presented with a set of 11 possible barriers that people perceive to be in their way to promotion in children's services, there were also differences in what people from ethnically diverse communities experienced.

Fig 15 | Do you feel that there are any barriers in your way to promotion within children's services? (all children's services employees)



Top 3 barriers for respondents from white communities

1. Limited or no access to leadership development programmes in children's services
2. Lack of coaching from my line manager or more senior staff in children's services in my local authority
3. Limited or no access to mentoring programmes in my local authority

Top 3 barriers for respondents from ethnically diverse communities

1. Lack of diverse role models operating at more senior levels in my local authority
2. = Limited or no access to leadership development programmes in children's services

   = Lack of trust that recruitment processes will be fair

A lack of representation at senior levels is a key concern for those from ethnically diverse groups. As one Black interviewee put it: 'you can't be what you can't see'. Whilst there is some crossover between the two groups, there is still a key issue around trust that needs to be built between organisations and ethnically diverse communities.

More granular investigation of the data also shows some differences between different ethnic groups of the barriers perceived to exist to promotion in children's services.

So according to our survey, clear progression pathways are more important to those from Asian groups, whereas trust and representation matters more to those from Black communities.

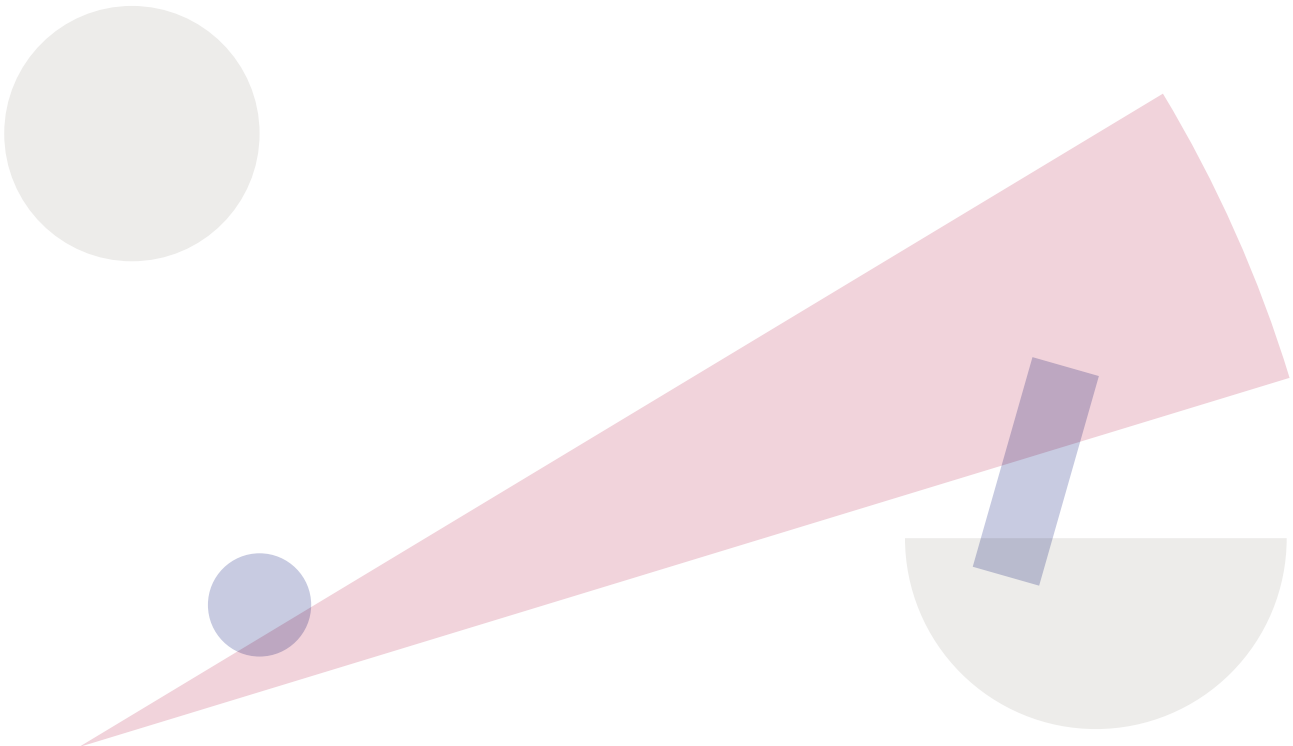
Top 3 barriers for respondents from Asian communities

1. Limited or no access to leadership development programmes in children's services
2. Lack of clear progression pathways
3. Lack of opportunity to develop leadership skills in children's services in my local authority

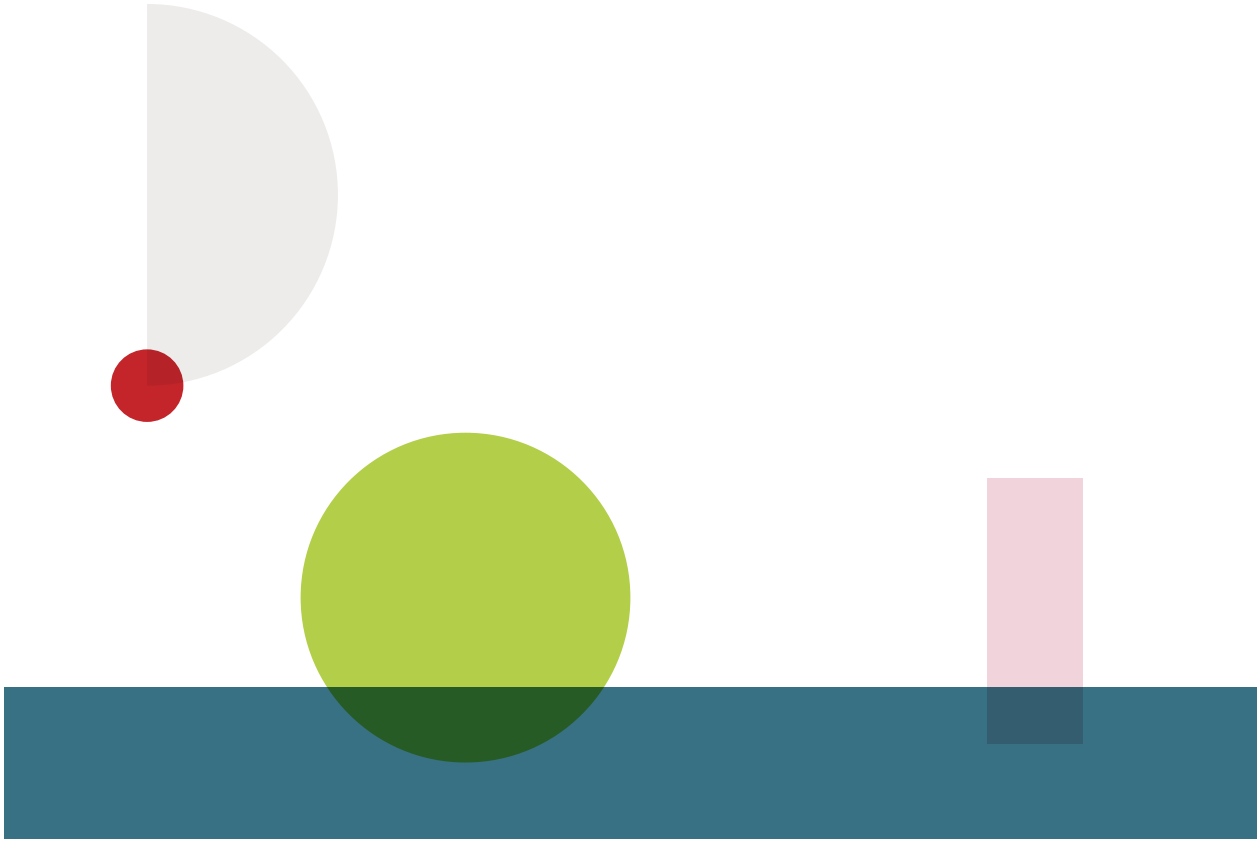
Top 3 barriers for respondents from Black communities

1. Lack of diverse role models operating at more senior levels in my local authority
2. Lack of trust that recruitment processes will be fair
3. = Limited or no access to leadership development programmes in children's services

   = Lack of opportunity to develop leadership skills in children's services in my local authority



Section 5
Leadership development content and learning methods



Section 5
Leadership development content and learning methods

5.1
Developing programme content to support ethnically diverse leaders and inclusive workplaces

The survey and interviews explored suggestions for leadership development content which specifically supports the leadership aspirations of those from ethnically diverse communities, and the particular skills and knowledge that need to be focused on in order to help leaders focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. These come from all respondents and can be condensed into three main themes:

- Diverse representation
- Cultural competence
- White privilege and anti-racism

Diverse representation

Linked to the way that those from ethnically diverse communities feel about their workplaces in general, many suggested that any leadership development programme itself needs to have diverse representation embedded. From ensuring that those from ethnically diverse communities have a hand in the creation and development of the programme, to ensuring a high level of diversity amongst facilitators. And inviting external speakers from minority ethnic backgrounds to share their lived experiences and career journeys to ensuring that participants from these backgrounds also have a support group to share their own experiences with, the message was clear that any leadership development programme that is designed to support the leadership aspirations of those from ethnically diverse communities needs to have representation at its core.

Led by an under-represented leader to start with.

(Black woman)

BAME role models and leaders who would support and mentor aspiring managers. Sharing of how other BAME leaders achieved senior management roles.

(White and Black Caribbean woman)

Role models on the course… a support group for BAME people.

(Ethnicity and gender not supplied)

…visually seeing people who look like me and have my life experience in similar roles.

(Black participant)

Mentoring by other BAME staff.

(White and Black Caribbean woman)

Cultural competence

In survey responses, there was also a clear call to action to move away from what respondents termed 'Eurocentric models of leadership' and understand how other models, behaviours and attitudes can add value to workplaces. 'Eurocentric models of leadership' was not explicitly defined by those who mentioned it in their responses, but we have taken it to refer to the models of leadership that have been developed in western civilisations and underpinned by a focus on the individual as compared to, for example, Afrocentric leadership models which are often considered more collectivist in nature.

In follow-up interviews with survey respondents, there was also a narrative around the level to which those from ethnically diverse backgrounds who are currently in senior leadership positions have been forced to assimilate with the predominant (white) culture to a greater or lesser extent. One Black interviewee highlighted that even when there are Black people at the top, they speak with British accents, and their appearance is almost never aligned to any Black cultural traditions. A similar point was made by a white respondent talking about the discrimination faced by an Eastern European colleague of his (but 'only once she opened her mouth to speak'), and that the accents you hear amongst white leadership are almost always white British, or at least from parts of the world where English is a first language.

This links with the earlier point about the need for individuals from ethnically diverse communities to adapt their behaviours to suit the dominant (white) culture in order to progress.

Key insight

Building greater cultural competence and an understanding of how different leadership models can contribute to organisational effectiveness will enable leaders to strengthen workplace inclusion.

I often find that the few BAME people to progress to the higher echelons of children's services are often people who have either changed or shortened their name, compromised in order to be accepted. Or it is people who lead a very similar white British lifestyle, so they are accepted more easily. Whereas staff who embrace their Black African roots, or their Asian culture, more overtly are often side-lined from the onset.

(Asian participant - no gender supplied)

Exploration of what leadership means in the context of their background, does this differ to Eurocentric models of leadership and how can we call benefit from this?

(White participant - no gender supplied)

...you need to change the knowledge base from a Eurocentric one to a culturally diverse and spiritual one...

(Asian participant - no gender supplied)

Learning about and incorporating difference

(White participant - no gender supplied)

White privilege and anti-racism

The final theme that emerged from suggestions to develop more inclusive environments provided in the survey was around building an understanding of white privilege and what it means to be anti-racist.

The focus on unconscious bias and anti-racism more embedded instead of an afterthought/tick box.

(Black woman)

Understanding and identifying solutions to the difficulties that Black, Asian and ethnic minority aspirant DCSs face.

(No ethnicity or gender provided)

Gain an understanding of the factors that block and enable BAME progression and development… understand how to influence and positively contribute to organisational change in response to inclusion.

(Black woman)

An understanding of historic and structural racism and how these things impact on organisational cultures.

(White participant)

How to address the power imbalances within the workplace and how to overcome structural and organisational barriers to equality.

(White participant)

Humanity and understanding of fairness and white privilege. Also anti-discriminatory practice. Understanding of the existence of strategic (not unconscious) bias.

(Black participant)

An understanding of the experiences and bias/discrimination that diverse managers face every day. How this can be addressed, and understanding the lived and work experience of BAME managers working within these organisations

(Black Caribbean woman)

An ability to understand and acknowledge white privilege, the strength and ability to be anti-racist and an understanding of intersectionality and how all these impact on staff and communities' lived experience

(White respondent)

It is interesting that two of the three themes that have emerged from these suggestions are not about how to support individuals themselves, but how to ensure that aspirant and new leaders of all ethnicities are equipped to lead the workplaces of the future. These need to become more inclusive in order to support greater diversity and ensure that everyone feels a sense of belonging. In that spirit, it is our view that those leading and facilitating leadership development programmes also need to ensure that the values that underpin diversity and inclusion are weaved into all the knowledge they are sharing, regardless of the topic they are covering whilst also supporting the learning needs and preferences of groups that are currently under-represented at senior levels in children's services.

5.2
Building leadership programmes that support what aspirant leaders want – content and other supporting interventions

When presented with a set of 11 possible areas that an aspirant leadership programme in children's services should cover and 11 interventions to support 'classroom' learning, respondents prioritised the following:

Top 5 areas an aspirant leadership programme should cover – white respondents

1. Influence, impact and skilful communication
2. Making partnership and relationships count in children's services
3. Strategic focus and comfort with change & change management
4. Promoting and enabling collaboration
5. = Embracing difference
   = Courage and resilience

Top 5 areas an aspirant leadership programme should cover – ethnically diverse communities

1. Influence, impact and skilful communication
2. Making partnership and relationships count in children's services
3. Strategic focus and comfort with change & change management
4. Promoting and enabling collaboration
5. Identifying individual potential and talent

Top 3 supporting interventions – white communities

1. Mentoring
2. Development workshops
3. = External speakers
   = External coaching

Top 3 supporting interventions – ethnically diverse communities

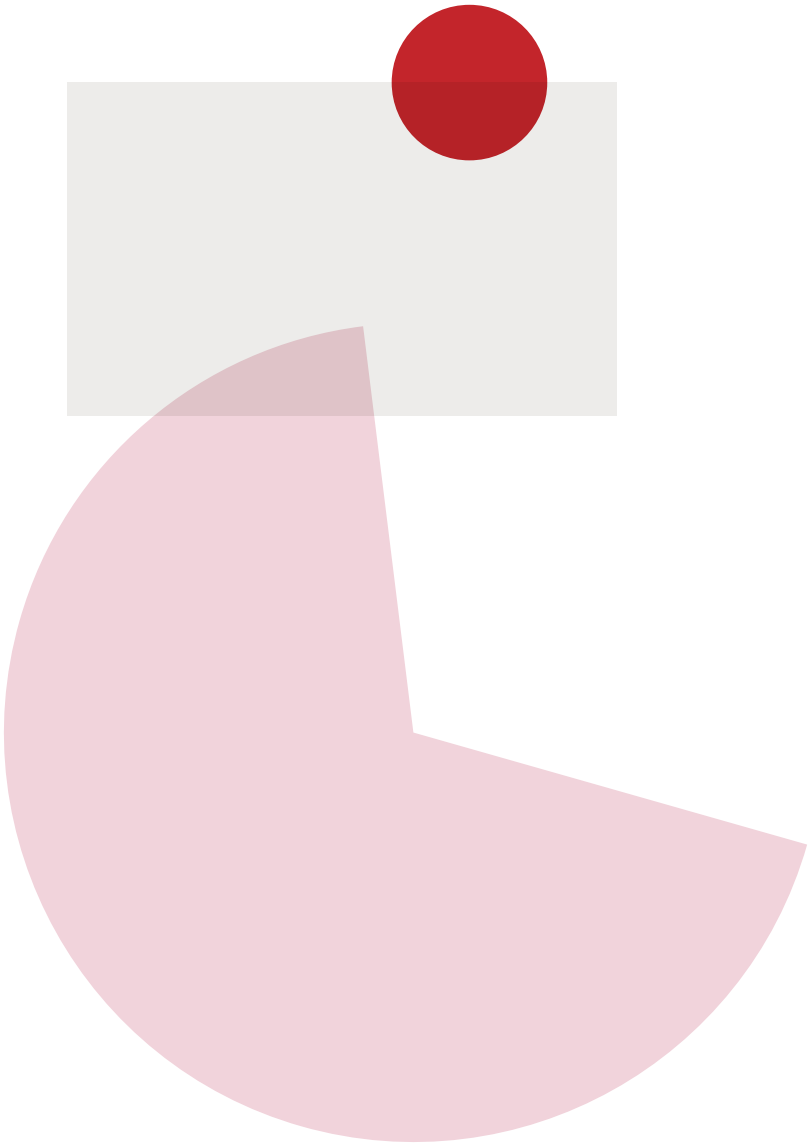
1. External coaching
2. = Mentoring
   = Development centres and assessment
   = Diagnostic insight

When faced with the areas that many leadership development programmes cover, there is almost no difference between groups as to the top five areas that should be covered. This is with the exception of white groups wanting to learn about embracing difference – perhaps because there is increasing acknowledgement that majority white leaders have not been good at this in the past – and ethnically diverse communities prioritise the identification of individual potential and talent – perhaps because, as this report has shown, so many from this group have been denied that in their careers.

Key insight

Combining these areas with previous comments about Eurocentric models of leadership suggests that programme developers would do well to consider including discussion of a range of different leadership models

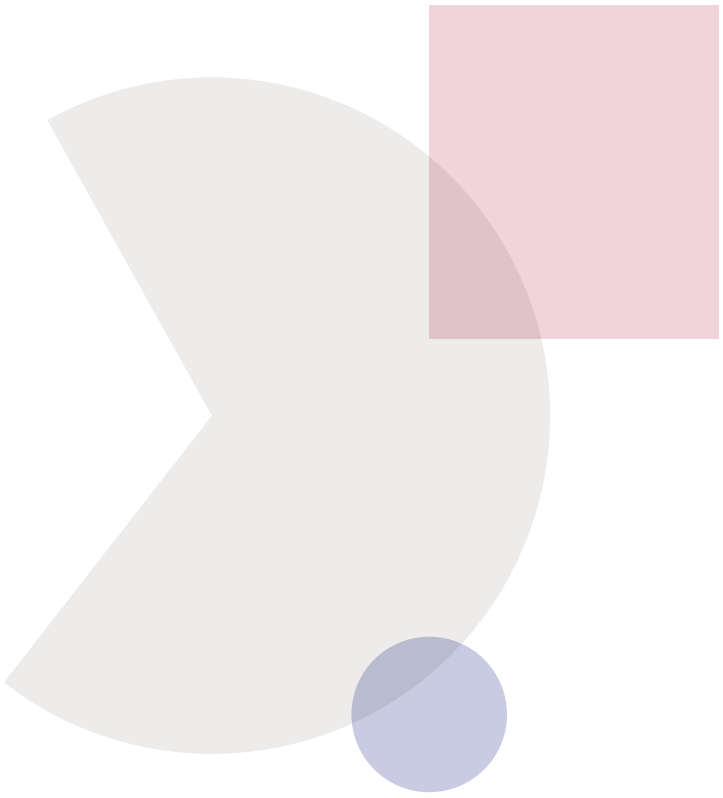
Section 6
Recommendations



Section 6
Recommendations

The recommendations that have been set out below have been categorised according to which organisation or group they are most likely to be driven by. Many of these recommendations, however, will require collaboration across groups, sectors, and organisations in order for them to achieve sustainable and long-lasting change. The overarching message to local authorities, leadership development teams, executive search and recruitment agencies, and the Department for Education is that everyone has a role to play in creating this change.

We welcome the news that eighteen local authorities across England are piloting the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) in social care throughout 2021. The WRES provides organisations with a framework to tackle the institutional and systemic racism highlighted in this report, and the recommendations that follow complement the standard. We are also aware of other standards, frameworks and activities that are happening across children's services (and more broadly in local authorities) that seek to create the inclusive cultures this report champions. We have designed these recommendations to further enhance this work and embed greater transformation across the sector as well as at an organisational level.



6.1
Recommendations for local authorities and other employers

1. Employing organisations need to devote time, energy and sustained action to tackling all forms of racism faced by employees in their workplaces. To achieve this, greater trust and understanding of what has to be changed needs to be built. Employing organisations should regularly measure how inclusive and psychologically safe people feel their workplaces are, including the ability to measure the responses of people from different ethnic communities, in order to ensure that culture change initiatives are directed appropriately and having an impact in the most critical areas.
2. Employing organisations need to invest time in building psychologically safe spaces for employees from ethnically diverse communities to build their confidence and trust in the inclusive organisations leaders are seeking to establish.
3. Review all employee engagement and lifecycle activities to ensure opportunities to give views on diversity and inclusion are included
4. Ensure that everyone, at all levels within employing organisations, is equipped with a level of cultural competence and that everyone understands what privilege is and means, as well as how their own personal privilege affects the way they view the world, the opportunities available to them, and how easy these opportunities are to pursue.
5. The events of 2020 provide a good opportunity to review diversity, inclusion and anti-racism training materials, to build in effective evaluation, and to embed their principles into day-to-day operations and the way teams are managed and run.
6. D&I and anti-racism should be embedded into other learning programmes, instead of just being a set of standalone modules. Employing organisations should consider how to ensure the right people – and not just those who already share the values underpinning D&I and anti-racism – are reached, for example by making modules compulsory for all employees and members.
7. Undertake audits of recruitment, selection and promotion processes to identify and remove bias and discrimination, including processes to select who will benefit from leadership development opportunities.
8. Consistent, measurable ways to evaluate the skills that people develop outside of the workplace are required so that managers are making hiring, promotion, and progression decisions that are not based on the type of environment these are developed in.
9. Develop clear progression pathways outlining what is expected at each level, and what people need to do to develop into more senior roles, and ensure that every employee has a clear development plan in place, with support from managers to undertake what is required in order to support more diverse talent pipelines.
10. When commissioning executive search and recruitment agencies for work - particularly at senior levels - employing organisations should seek out partners that can show evidence of their ability to build diverse shortlists and can provide diversity monitoring and impact data at each stage of the recruitment process.
11. Understand how workplace activities such as reverse mentoring, allyship and sponsorship can be established in order to create more inclusive cultures.

6.2
Recommendations for the UPON programme and other national, regional and local leadership development programmes

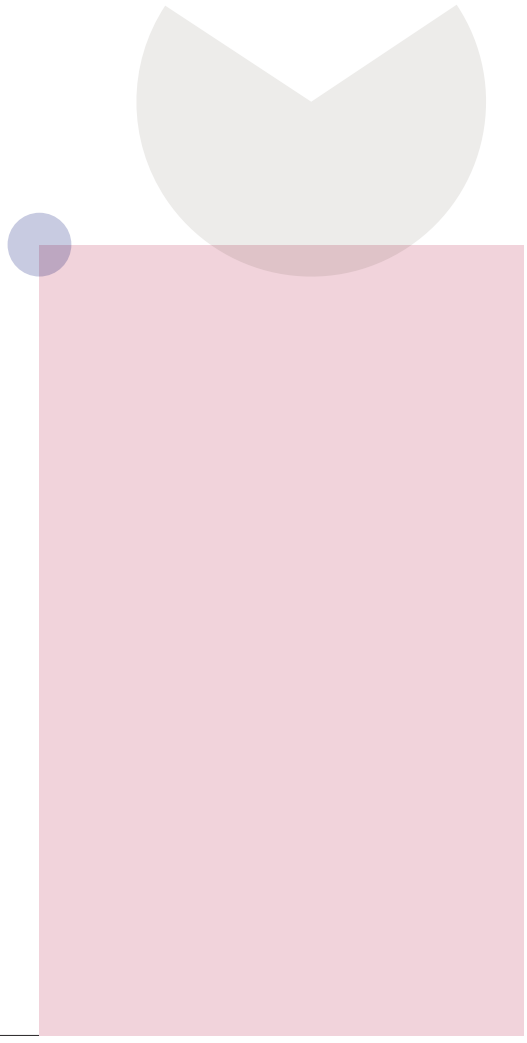
1. Leadership development programmes should ensure that future and new leaders understand the links between ethnicity, workplace wellbeing, and sense of belonging, and the impact this can have on performance and progression.
2. Embedding cultural competence into leadership development programmes and an understanding of how the societies or communities people have lived in helps to shape their approach to work and life, will help all leaders – regardless of background – become better. This knowledge would pair well with an element examining the importance of emotional intelligence to the role of a leader, thereby supporting aspirant and new leaders to adapt their leadership styles to that of their employees.
3. Leaders of the future need to be equipped to lead conversations on race, diversity and inclusion, including building psychologically safe environments in which to do so.
4. Ensure an open competition for places on leadership development programmes that is independent of place of work and based much more on skills and potential. UPON and other programmes like it should identify how to separate employee sponsorship from applications in order to remove the bias inherent in employer sponsorship, whilst recognising the need for support and effective sponsorship.
5. Leadership development opportunities should be marketed through employee groups linked to ethnicity and/or anti-racism in individual local authorities rather than relying solely on dissemination from Directors of Children's Services and through the hierarchy of departments.
6. Leadership development programmes need to design selection arrangements that ensure candidates from ethnically diverse communities are given an equal chance at being accepted. For example: by defining clear selection criteria which gives equal account to skills and experience developed outside the workplace; providing clarity about the time commitment required; clearly outlining the curriculum; and providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants.
7. Ensure that all groups associated with the development and delivery of leadership development programmes are ethnically diverse. Where this is not possible for development groups, undertake wide consultation with ethnically diverse groups to ensure that proposed content is appropriate and inclusive.
8. Leadership development programmes should include discussion and comparison of a range of leadership models (for example, Eurocentric, Afrocentric, Ubuntu, Seva-centric, Māori) and the different philosophical and values frameworks that contribute to them. Consideration of these frameworks should include broader discussion of cultural difference and how these can enhance inclusive cultures and accepted leadership behaviours, and should speak to a compelling narrative that links to transferable skills and experiences.
9. Use programme alumni as ambassadors to promote the benefits of the programme to a diverse range of potential participants.

6.3
Recommendations for executive search and recruitment agencies

1. Executive search and recruitment agencies should work in partnership with local authorities to challenge traditional job descriptions and seek to find more creative ways to recruit senior leaders, including Directors of Children's Services which focus on transferable skills.
2. Executive search and recruitment agencies should ensure that call lists of potential applicants are diverse, as well as focusing on seeking recommendations from a diverse source list.
3. Based on desk research, executive search and recruitment agencies should ensure diversity is reflected in their own selection and decision-making panels for any role, including in the selection panel at final stage interview.
4. Executive search and recruitment agencies should work in partnership with local authorities to find creative ways to recruit to management and leadership roles throughout children's services, which focus on transferable skills. This challenge should be cognisant of the value that skills developed outside the workplace can add.
5. Executive search and recruitment agencies should focus on thorough mapping of the candidate market, with a focus on targeting potential applicants from ethnically diverse communities and reaching out to the networks in which these potential candidates will be circulating.
6. Scoring systems at all stages of the process should be audited for bias before being implemented, and executive search and recruitment agencies should insist on diversity on recruitment panels.

6.4
Recommendations for the Department for Education

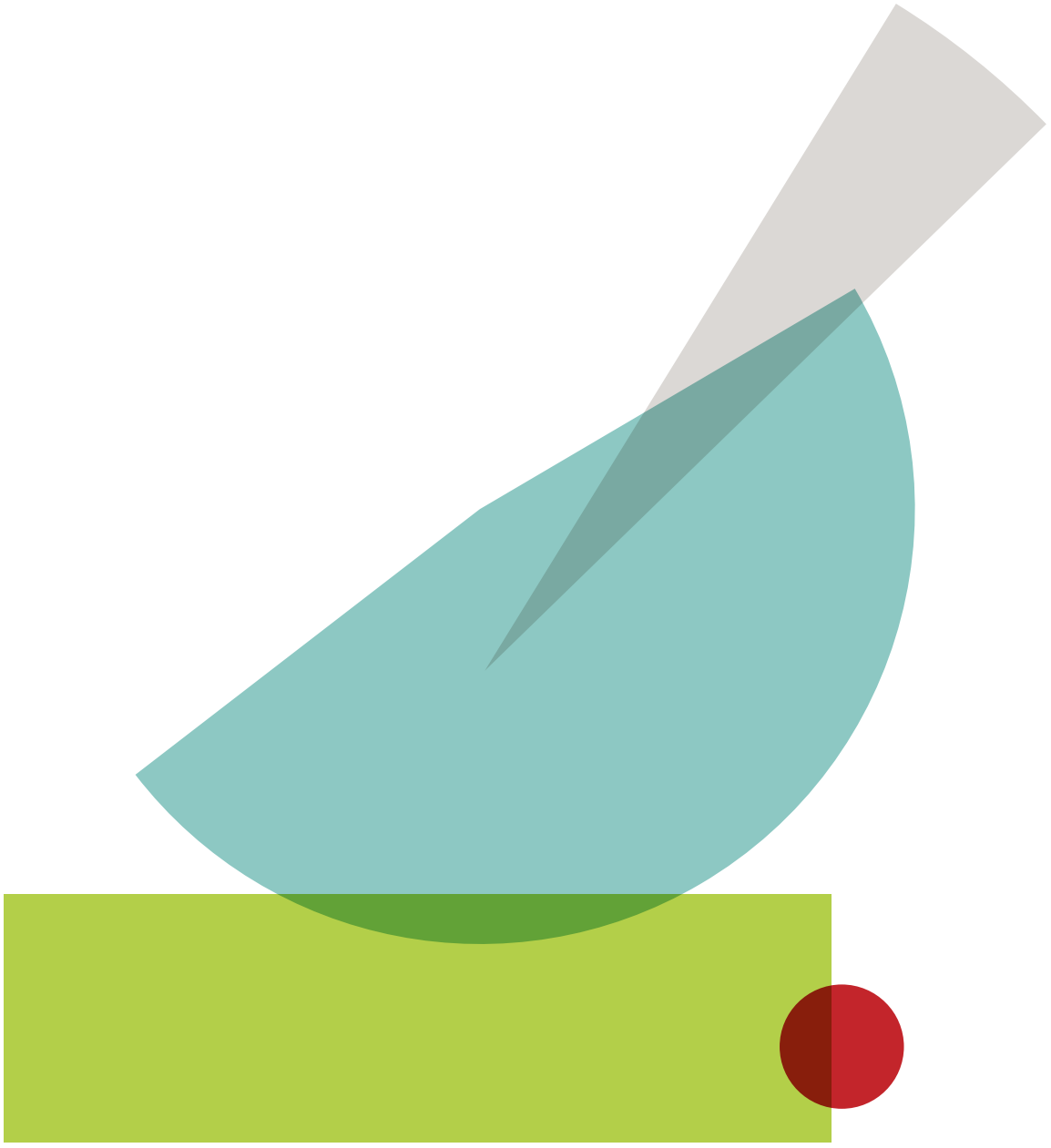
1. Consideration should be given to the way that leadership development programmes are funded in the longer term, to enable longer term succession planning in local authorities. Currently, the ethnically diverse leadership group is at more junior levels, but a longer-term focus will enable a better pull-through of talent.
2. Use the findings of this report to inform the review, development and coordination of nationally commissioned leadership development programmes.



Appendices

Appendix A
Summary of existing research

Appendix B
Survey and interview questions



Appendix A
Summary of existing research

The following reports, studies, and articles were used to inform our assumptions, survey and in-depth interviews as part of an initial literature review. All terminology used in this Appendix is drawn directly from the reports being summarised.

The workplace experiences of BAME professional women: Understanding experiences at the intersection

This 2020 report examines the workplace experiences of British Black, Asian and minority ethnic professional women, therefore focusing on intersectional identity narratives, and how these experiences impact on a range of wellbeing outcomes. The main themes that emerged from the study were:

i) Experiences of misperceived identity imposition, whereby negative assumptions were made about the way BAME women were 'supposed' to behave or look, often resulting in individuals shaping their own behaviour; and

ii) The use of "strategic essentialism" by participants (that is, the ability to transition between their 'British' identity and their ethnic minority identity and modify their behaviours). Participants in the study used this as a defensive mechanism or used strategically to their advantage.

The impact of race (and, in this case, gender) on wellbeing is an important consideration when considering barriers to progression faced by ethnic minority groups. There is a good amount of evidence to suggest that high levels of employee wellbeing result in higher levels of performance.[1]

CIPD: Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top

Surveying 1,290 BAME and white employees from across the UK, the CIPD compared the working experiences of these two groups, as well as looking in more depth at the different experiences of minority groups under the BAME umbrella – specifically Asian, Black, and mixed-race employees.

Findings indicate that whilst BAME employees are more likely than their white counterparts to value career progression in their working life, they are also more likely to say that their career progression to date has failed to meet their expectations. BAME employees are also more likely to experience discrimination and individuals particularly from an Indian/Pakistani/ Bangladeshi background saw a lack of role models as a progression barrier.

The research also found that BAME employees are significantly more likely to say that identity or background can have an impact on the opportunities given. However, both groups scored similarly on how satisfied they are with the training available in their organisation (48% BAME and 44% of white employees are satisfied) and only 4 out of 10 in both groups are satisfied with their career progression prospects in their current organisation.

When considering the areas that would help support their ambition, all BAME employees are significantly more likely to say that seeing other BAME employees progress would help boost their own careers. There are also differences in the types of support that individuals perceive will help them:

- People from Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi or mixed-race backgrounds are more likely to say that having a mentor would kick-start their career.
- People from Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi or Black backgrounds are more likely to say that more transparent career paths would help their career.

Three fifths of both groups feel their organisation has an inclusive culture, but BAME employees are much more likely to say they need to change aspects of their behaviour to fit in. Almost half of BAME employees feel the need to censor how much of themselves they reveal to their colleagues, compared to only 37% of white employees.

Where individuals have already taken part in mentoring, significantly more BAME employees than white employees found that it helped them achieve their potential at work. A quarter of BAME employees who did not have access to mentoring said it would be helpful to them (14% for white employees).

The study found that their line manager experiences were similar: a low level of support for career development was flagged as an issue across the board.

The report recommends that employers:

1. Understand what is happening in their organisations (identifying structural and cultural barriers and basic workforce data, for example, in order to ensure an evidence-based approach)
2. Be aware of intersectionality and examine progression barriers through multiple lenses
3. Critically appraise organisational culture
4. Actively encourage employee voice to inform change
5. Address unconscious bias

Bittersweet Success:
Glass ceilings for Britain's ethnic minorities at the top of business and the professions

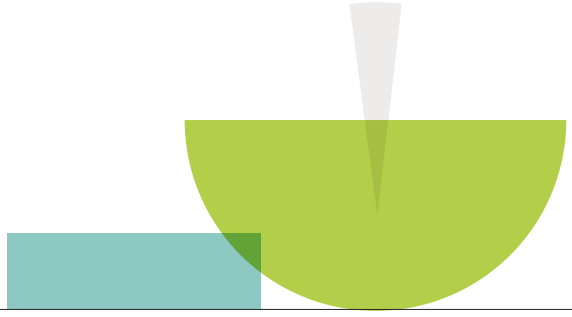
Much progress has been made in the last 20 years, but there are still too many all-white boards and committees at the top of British businesses and public bodies.

The report acknowledges that the glass ceilings depend on specific contexts and exist for a number of different reasons: sometimes because of 'closed, insular cultures' (e.g. unconscious bias, selecting successors in your own image) or because of systemic blockers, such as the hiring and promotions processes. It also outlines that people from ethnic minority groups are less likely to have access to the networks that can help with career progression and role modelling.

Race in the Workplace:
The McGregor-Smith Review (2017)

This takes a broad view of the reasons that sit behind lack of progression of people from ethnic minority communities, examining not just workplace issues but wider economic reasons. In the workplace, the report points to a lack of role models in the workplace, lack of transparency about career pathways, and a lack of available workforce data.

Additionally, the report outlines the fear that still exists in workplaces to talk about race and that leadership can act as a barrier or can provide the solutions that enable success. The report calls for support for building inclusive cultures to come from the top, to act as mentors and sponsors and to play their part in supporting people from all backgrounds.



Ethnic Diversity Enriching Business Leadership: An update report from the Parker Review

The Parker Review challenges FTSE100 organisations to increase the ethnic diversity of their executive and non-executive Boards. In particular, it highlights continued issues of a lack of diversity in talent pipelines for senior roles, and that company cultures do not actively encourage talented minority executives. The report points to systemic problems of talent bias – that no significant changes have been made to the ways in which organisations identify, develop and appoint talent; an inability to value diverse experiences and perspectives, and the tendency for current systems to overlook well-trained, qualified people.

As with the McGregor-Smith Review, this report also points to the reluctance to talk about race and ethnicity at work, to acknowledge the value it brings to the experience of individuals, and the reluctance among executives to understand the way race and ethnicity shapes a person's lived experience.

Leadership imbalance: Black and Asian leaders missing in action

(Virtual Staff College think piece)

2014 – appears to be the most recent publicly available document outlining diversity in Children's Services.

Despite greater BAME representation in the general workforce, they are often not progressing to senior leadership positions. The report indicates systemic problems embedded in the way organisation hire and promote talent, and a lack of access to informal networks as key drivers of the barriers faced by BAME talent.

The report talks of the additional responsibilities taken on by Black leaders, such as the perceptions of white staff and the expectations of Black staff.[2]

Churn rising again among Directors of Children's Services, report finds

"Of 94 [out of 153] DCSs who provided data, 94% identified as white British (84%), white Irish (3%) or other white (7%). Only 1% identified as black African, with the same percentage for black Caribbean and white and Asian.

For comparison, 78% of children's social workers in the latest census from the Department for Education are white, with 12% black, 6% Asian and 4% mixed.

CIPD (2017) Addressing the barriers to BAME employee career progression to the top
https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/addressing-the-barriers-to-BAME-employee-career-progression-to-the-top_tcm18-33336.pdf

The McGregor-Smith Review: Race in the Workplace
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf

Opara, V (2020) The workplace experiences of BAME professional women: Understanding experiences at the intersection
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Policy Exchange (2016) Bittersweet Success? Glass Ceilings for Britain's Ethnic Minorities at the Top of Business and the Professions
https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/bittersweet-success-glass-ceilings-for-britains-ethnic-minorities-at-the-top-of-business-and-the-professions/

Spillett, M (2014) Leadership Imbalance: Black and Asian Leaders Missing in Action
https://thestaffcollege.uk/publications/leadership-imbalance-black-and-asian-leaders-missing-in-action/

Appendix B
Survey and interview questions

The survey split respondents into two distinct groups – stakeholders and children's services employees – who each answered a similar set of questions. The main difference was that children's services employees were asked about their lived experience of working in children's services, while stakeholders were asked what their perceptions were of these departments.

Survey questions
Children's services employees
(including Directors of Children's Services)

1. Do you aspire to be a Director of Children's Services? Your answer to this question will help us direct you to the most relevant parts of the survey for you.
2. What is your current job title?
3. How long have you worked in Children's Services within a local authority (in any role or combination of roles)?
   a. Less than one year
   b. 1-4 years
   c. 5-9 years
   d. 10-14 years
   e. 15+ years
4. Before moving to your current role, what was your job title and what sector did you work in?
5. Which of the following best describes your current role?
   a. CEO
   b. Director
   c. Assistant Director
   d. Head of Service
   e. Service Manager
   f. Team Manager
   g. Other
6. What type of local authority do you work in/support?
   a. County Council
   b. London Borough
   c. Metropolitan Council
   d. Unitary Council
   e. Other
7. How inclusive do you find your current workplace and its practices of employees from Black and Asian backgrounds? Range: 1 (not at all inclusive) to 5 (extremely inclusive)
8. To what extent are you involved with formal or informal networks in your organisation outside of the Children's Services department, including working groups, project teams, diversity and inclusion networks, or other corporate initiatives? Range: 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)
9. Research suggests that over two thirds of people from a minority ethnic background report changing their behaviours in order to be accepted at work, with nearly half reporting that they have to censor what they tell others about themselves.[1] To what extent do you feel that you need to change your behaviour to be accepted and fit in your current workplace? Range: 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)

10. In what ways have you had to change your behaviours or censor yourself in your current Children's Services workplace in order to feel that you are accepted and fit in? Open response with options for not applicable and unsure.

11. Have you experienced or seen others experience racism in your organisation? Yes/No

12. If yes, what type of racism have you experienced or seen? (You can select more than one answer)
    a. Staff treated differently in recruitment or promotion processes (including opportunities to act up temporarily into more senior roles)
    b. Unfair application of grievance, disciplinary, and probationary procedures or processes
    c. Overt racism from colleagues within the local authority
    d. Over racism from colleagues in other agencies
    e. Over racism from elected officials
    f. Staff treated differently because they have raised a complaint or grievance
    g. Staff experiencing harassment
    h. Other (please provide further information)

13. Does your local authority provide any diversity and inclusion training? Yes/No/Unsure

14. If you answered yes to the previous question, what type of training does it provide (to the best of your knowledge)?
    a. Diversity and inclusion induction
    b. Unconscious bias
    c. Anti-racism
    d. Inclusive leadership
    e. Other (please provide further information)

15. And how effective would you say this training is? Range from 1 (not at all effective) to 5 (very effective)

16. Does your local authority run a reverse mentoring scheme, where individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds mentor more senior white colleagues, sharing their experiences as Black and/or Asian employees within Children's Services? Yes/No/Unsure

17. Do you feel that you can safely raise issues or start conversations about race, ethnicity and cultural difference in Children's Services within your local authority?
    a. Yes completely
    b. Yes to some extent
    c. Sometimes
    d. No Never
    e. Please add any further comments to explain your rating

18. Often, those from minority backgrounds carry unfair expectations to lead conversations about their protected characteristic and to educate other colleagues.[2] To what extent do you feel that white people in your organisation are allies in tackling racism and discrimination in the workplace, and encouraging a diverse and inclusive culture? Range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)

19. Within Children's Services in your local authority, to what extent do you personally feel that you can influence change on race and ethnicity issues? Range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)

20. Are you aware of any talent/leadership development programmes within your local authority (e.g. programmes or activities that help fast track or prepare people for their next promotion level)? If yes go to the next question. If no, please skip the next question. Yes/No

21. If yes, how did you hear about these programmes?
    a. Word of mouth from other colleagues
    b. My manager brought them to my attention as part of my development plan
    c. Social media
    d. Communications or newsletters from within my local authority
    e. Communications or newsletters from organisations outside of my local authority
    f. Other (please provide further information)

22. To what extent do you feel that there is a fair and transparent process for how people are selected to participate in these programmes? Range from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)

23. Have you had the opportunity to undertake any career or skills development since January 2019 (for example: online learning, job shadowing, mentoring, coaching, secondments, classroom-based training, gaining formal qualifications)? Yes/No/Unsure

24. Do you feel that you face any limitations with regards to supporting/accessing career development opportunities in your current workplace? Yes/No/Unsure

25. Have you been involved in any activities outside of your workplace that have helped you developed leadership skills? Yes/No/Unsure

26. If you answered yes to the previous question, what organisations have you been involved with?
    a. Charity organisation
    b. Voluntary organisation
    c. Religious organisation
    d. Study you have paid for yourself
    e. Other (please state)

27. Do you think your employer values leadership skills that have been developed in this way when making hiring, promotion or progression decisions? Yes/No/Unsure

28. To what extent do you perceive that people in Children's Services in your local authority progress/get promoted on the basis of merit? Range: 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent)

29. Research indicates that providing transparent pathways for career development can be hugely advantageous to encouraging diverse participation and engagement with personal development initiatives.[3] How clear are the promotion pathways and processes within your local authority? Range: 1 (not at all clear) to 5 (very clear)

30. Seeing someone with similar lived experiences to you progress to senior levels in an organisation can be inspiring. Can you identify such a role model in your current organisation? Yes/No/Unsure

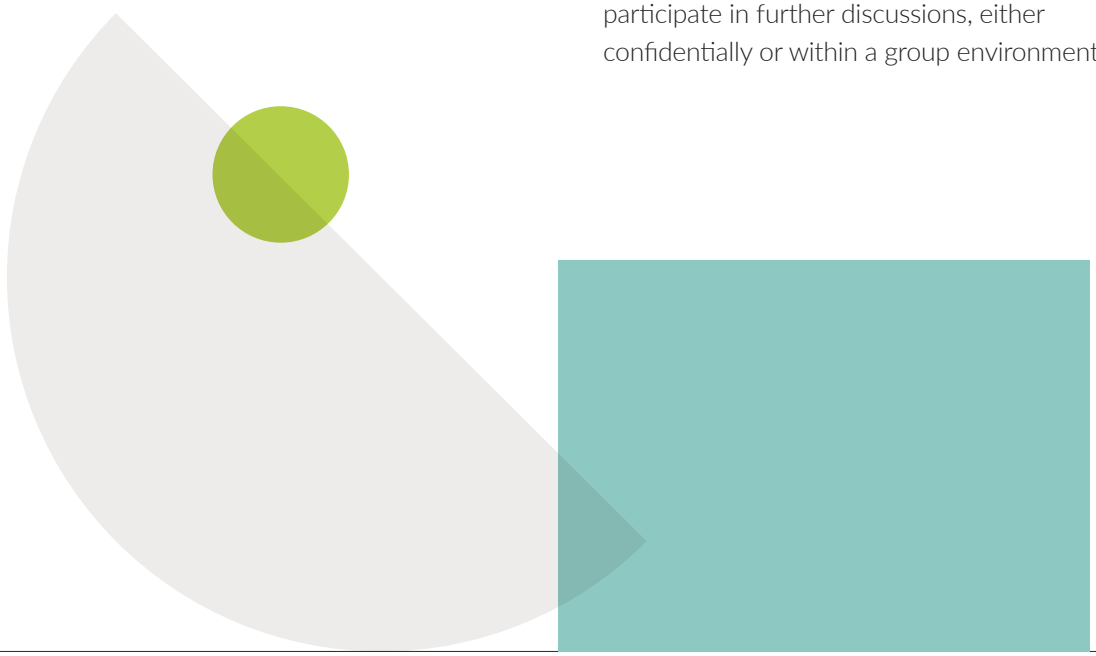
31. Do you feel that there are any barriers in your way to promotion within children's services? (Yes/No/Unsure)

32. What do you perceive as the main barriers (if any) to progressing your career in Children's Services? (tick up to five)
    a. Lack of job opportunities in children's services
    b. Lack of opportunity to network with people outside children's services
    c. Lack of opportunity to develop leadership skills in my current role and local authority
    d. Unclear feedback on performance from my line manager
    e. Limited or no access to leadership development programmes in children's services
    f. Limited or no access to mentoring programmes in my local authority
    g. Lack of clear progression pathways in children's services in my local authority
    h. Lack of coaching from line manager or more senior staff in children's services in my local authority
    i. No access to part-time or flexible working in more senior roles in my local authority
    j. Lack of diverse role models operating at senior levels in my local authority
    k. Lack of trust that recruitment processes will be fair
    l. I do not think there are any barriers to progressing my career in children's services
    m. Other (please specify)

33. What are the top five areas that you feel an aspirant leader programme should cover? Please respond in order of priority.
    a. Making partnerships/relationships count in children's services
    b. National and global trends in children's services
    c. Commercial insight and financial leadership
    d. Influence, impact and skilful communication
    e. Strategic focus and comfort with change and change management
    f. Team unity
    g. Promoting and enabling collaboration
    h. Embracing difference
    i. Identifying individual potential and talent
    j. Courage and resilience
    k. Comfort with legal governance and compliance
    l. Other (please specify)

34. More traditional class room or 'taught' development is just one aspect of what can best support and develop aspiring leaders. Other supporting interventions often help increase the effectiveness of an individual's development journey. With this in mind, which of the following career development options would you find the most useful? Select your top three:
    a. External coaching
    b. Internal coaching by someone in my organisation
    c. Peer coaching
    d. Mentoring
    e. Career coaching to understand the job market
    f. Development workshops
    g. Short reconnect sessions between workshops
    h. Development centres or assessment to determine my strengths and development areas
    i. Diagnostic insight (e.g. 360 to see how others perceive me)
    j. Action Learning Sets (progressing a strategic project with other participants)
    k. External speakers (e.g. current Directors of Children's Services sharing their stories)
    l. Is there anything else you see as being a useful element?

35. We are keen to follow up the results of these surveys with one-to-one interviews and some focus group activity and conversations. Please leave your email address if you are willing to participate in further discussions, either confidentially or within a group environment.



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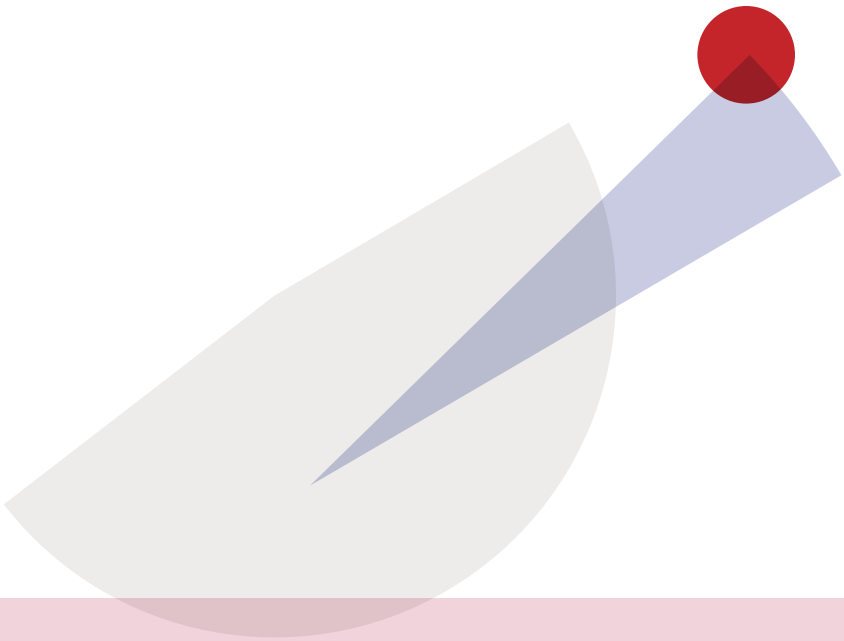

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