

ADDRESSING RACIAL TRAUMA



A GUIDE FOR POLICYMAKERS

TERMINOLOGY

Trauma is a term used to describe a range of psychological and emotional responses to distressing or life-threatening events, such as violence, abuse, or discrimination, including those experienced in childhood. Its effects on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, families and, on occasion, entire communities are wide ranging, and can be severe.

Racial trauma is created by prolonged or repeated exposure to racism which harms the way people see themselves, undermines their worth, and disconnects them from others. People from racialised and minoritised communities, who are treated differently because of their perceived racial, ethnic, cultural or religious differences, are at risk of trauma because of their exposure to racism in its many different forms.

Racism causes trauma and creates poor mental health. The traumatic effects of racism are not exclusively rooted in catastrophic events but also the day-to-day grind of interpersonal racism and so called microaggressions. Racism also stops people who experience trauma from getting the help they need.

Culturally competent services are those that respect and respond to the values, beliefs, and preferences of people from different cultural and religious backgrounds, and that acknowledge the impact of racism and discrimination on their mental health.

Trauma informed services are those that recognise the prevalence and consequences of trauma in people's lives, and that provide care that is safe, respectful, and empowering.

Culturally competent and trauma-informed services are essential for meeting the mental health needs of people from racialised communities, who often face multiple barriers to accessing appropriate and effective care.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Policymakers, both national (in government and the NHS) and local (for example in integrated care systems, local authorities), can help to create the conditions for culturally competent and trauma-informed services to thrive.

1. Implement the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework

Implement, in full, the **Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF)**, across all mental health services for all ages, with clear accountability structures for the completion of this important transformation programme. All major mental health care providers, including in the independent and voluntary sectors, can implement PCREF.

2. Partner with community organisations

Provide secure and **sustainable funding for community-led organisations**, both as providers of support and as advocates for their communities. Work in partnership with community organisations to carry out local needs assessments and co-create strategies for meeting people's needs effectively. Create spaces to enable active listening and dialogue to ensure that policies and practices are actively mitigating and overcoming, rather than perpetuating, trauma.

Coffee Afrik CIC

Coffee Afrik CIC is rooted in the belief that healing is a collective process that requires culturally sensitive and community-driven solutions. Its community hubs and outreach services focus on creating spaces where individuals can connect, share experiences, and access support tailored to their cultural and social contexts. A healing-orientated approach aligns with Coffee Afrik's mission to empower communities to heal from within, addressing the root causes of trauma, such as systemic racism and social injustice.

3. Inform public opinion

Public awareness campaigns can play a significant role in educating the broader community about the impacts of trauma on racialised individuals and the importance of compassionate, culturally sensitive approaches. Through media outreach, social media engagement, and community events, it is possible to highlight personal stories and a wide range of lived experiences. Informing and involving the public can drive societal change, reduce stigma, and build a collective commitment to fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

4. Allocate resources for training

Provide comprehensive **training for all professionals** working in health, housing, education, employment, policing, and immigration services. Training should cover the principles of trauma-informed care, cultural competence, and the specific challenges faced by racialised communities. Continuous professional development opportunities should also be provided to keep practitioners updated on best practices.

5. Monitor and evaluate impact

Establish mechanisms to monitor and **evaluate the impact of policies** on racialised and minoritised communities. Collect and analyse data to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the policies are effectively addressing trauma and promoting healing. Regular feedback from the communities served should be sought to guide adjustments and enhancements to the policies and how they are implemented in practice. This needs to reflect the different experiences of different groups, to avoid homogenising and simplifying a wide range of experiences.

6. Strengthen professional and service regulation

Professional and service regulation is pivotal in ensuring that trauma-informed care is effectively implemented across different sectors. National regulatory bodies have a significant role to play in **setting clear standards**, improving awareness, and driving measurable improvements in practice. By establishing comprehensive guidelines and expectations for culturally competent and trauma-informed care, these bodies can create a framework that professionals must adhere to, ensuring consistency and quality.

RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

How racism affects health, [The Health Foundation](#)

This briefing note sets out clearly and simply how racism makes it harder for people to be healthy.

Anti-Racist Praxis Conference: Briefing paper, [London Borough of Hackney](#)

The Anti-Racist Praxis Conference briefing paper outlines strategies to address racial trauma in Hackney, focusing on unmasking, repairing, and preventing the hidden wounds of racial oppression in children and families.

Racism, Mental Health and Trauma Research Round Up, [UK Trauma Council](#)

This resource provides a roundup of research on how racism impacts mental health and trauma. It includes studies and findings that can help practitioners understand the profound effects of racism on development and mental health.

Working definition of Trauma-informed practice, [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#)

This document offers a working definition of trauma-informed practice for health and care practitioners. It outlines key principles and provides guidance on how to integrate trauma-informed approaches into services to improve accessibility and quality of care.



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