



Understanding and addressing racism at work

Your guide



Your guide to understanding and addressing racism at work

At Highland Hospice, we believe everyone should feel safe, respected, and valued. Racism has no place here. If you've experienced racism, or you're supporting someone who has, this guide is for you. It's also here to help all of us understand what racism looks like and how we can challenge it together.

Why this matters

Racism is harmful, not only to those who experience it but also to teams, relationships, and the organisation as a whole. We acknowledge that racism exists in society and can appear in workplaces. Our commitment is to listen, learn, and act so that everyone can thrive.

What this guide covers

- What racism is and how it shows up at work.
- How to recognise signs of racial harassment or discrimination.
- How to support colleagues and respond appropriately.
- Where to find help and resources.

This applies to everyone - employees, volunteers, agency staff, contractors, students, and trainees.

What is racism?

Racism is more than individual acts, it includes behaviours, systems, and attitudes that disadvantage people based on race, ethnicity, colour, or nationality.

Under the Equality Act 2010, race includes:

- Colour
- Nationality (including citizenship)
- Ethnic or national origins



Types of discrimination

- **Direct discrimination:** Treating someone worse because of their race.
- **Indirect discrimination:** A policy or rule that applies to everyone but disadvantages a racial group.
- **Harassment:** Unwanted behaviour that violates dignity or creates a hostile environment.
- **Victimisation:** Treating someone badly because they raised a complaint or supported someone who did.
- **Microaggressions:** Subtle comments or actions that may seem minor but cause harm over time.

Examples of racism

- Racial slurs, jokes, or “banter.”
- Mimicking accents or cultural behaviours.
- Unwanted comments about appearance, food, or clothing.
- Excluding someone from social events or team activities.
- Denying opportunities for training or promotion unfairly.
- Touching someone’s hair without consent.
- Offensive material shared online or in person.

Racism can happen anywhere - in the office, at social events, online, or even through third parties like patients or visitors.

Recognising the impact

Experiencing racism can be traumatic. People may not report it because they fear being labelled, ignored, or retaliated against. Signs someone may be struggling include:

- Withdrawal from team activities.
- Increased absences or changes in behaviour.
- Visible stress, anxiety, or loss of confidence.
- Physical signs like fatigue or tension.



If you suspect racism

Start with empathy. You might say:

- “I’ve noticed you seem quieter lately, how are you feeling?”
- “Is there anything happening at work that’s worrying you?”
- “I’m here if you want to talk.”

Listen without judgment. Believe them. Don’t minimise their experience or suggest “it could have been worse.” Sometimes, being heard is the most important first step.

If you experience racism

- You are not to blame. What happened is not your fault.
- Talk to someone you trust - a colleague, manager, religious leader, or HR.
- Keep evidence such as notes, emails, messages, dates, and witnesses.
- Report it through the Bullying and Harassment Policy or Grievance Policy. If it’s a crime, you can contact Police Scotland.
- Seek support through services who can advise you such as occupational health, Health Heroes, or mental Health First Aiders who can sign post you.

Support available

- NHS 24: Call 111
- Police Scotland: 101 (or 999 in emergencies)
- Samaritans: 116 123
- BME networks and equality resources
- Health Heroes: 0800 3 58 48 58



For managers

- Lead by example, make it clear racism will not be tolerated.
- Create a safe space for staff to speak up.
- Take disclosures seriously and act promptly.
- Promote equality and diversity training.
- Take steps to improve inclusion.

Our commitment

Racism has no place in our organisation. We are committed to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace for everyone. If you raise a concern, you will be listened to, treated with dignity, and fully supported.

All staff are trained in active bystander principles so that we can recognise, challenge, and prevent racism together. Each of us has a role in building a culture where every colleague feels valued, heard, and able to thrive.

Further information

You can find the Racism at Work Policy, along with the Grievance Policy, on the G-Drive and the staff intranet. If you're unsure how to access them, your line manager or a member of the HR team will be happy to help.



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