



YEAR OF BLACK WORKERS

Establishing legacy to
generate change

Negotiating for race equality: recruitment and selection

Why is it vital to challenge racism in recruitment and selection procedures?

Because it will

- ensure **Black** workers have equal access to career progression, good quality jobs and pay
- help address deep-rooted discrimination and reduce unfair treatment, including stereotyping
- recruit new members and activists, of benefit to all the membership and contributing to the growth and future strength of your branch
- place public authorities under a proactive duty to identify and publicise opportunities to promote equality and diversity.

No workplace where racism is allowed to flourish can ever be effectively organised. That's why anti-racist work must be part of all branch activity.

It is unlawful to discriminate in recruitment or employment because of race. Race is defined as: race or colour; nationality (including citizenship); ethnic or national origins. More information: '[Equality and diversity guide](#)'

Ethnicity employment gap

The [Office for National Statistics](#) found that, in 2019, 78% of white people were employed, compared with 66% of people from all other ethnic groups combined, with the lowest employment rate in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group (56%).

The TUC stress that "BME workers faced a higher unemployment rate before the pandemic, were hit harder during the pandemic itself, and are now seeing a slower recovery than white workers. The pandemic has widened the gap in unemployment rates between white and BME workers to the widest it's been since 2008."

How can branches make recruitment and selection in the workplace fairer?

- Has the recruitment policy and procedure been equality proofed? Is the trade union involved in the equality impact assessment? Does the policy and procedure impact adversely on Black workers even unintentionally?

More information: [UNISON's model equality impact assessment flowchart](#)

- Does the composition of the workforce reflect the local population and if not, is any monitoring being carried out to determine whether Black people are applying for job vacancies or promotions? If not, where is the evidence? Are Black people employed across all grades or disproportionately at lower grades or on more insecure contracts?

More information: [Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Good equality practice for employers: equality policies, equality training and monitoring'](#)

- Have you undertaken a staff or members' survey about experiences of the recruitment and selection

process? What action has been taken where discrimination has been found? Collecting this sort of information will not only provide a measure for progress but can indicate where barriers exist and therefore where action needs to be taken.

More information: [UNISON's 'Negotiating fair recruitment and selection procedures'](#) covering specific issues from advertising, the application form and shortlisting through to interviews, internal appointments, references and much more.

- Have all staff involved in the recruitment and selection process been trained to operate it fairly and non-discriminately? Is this training mandatory? Does it include unconscious bias training?

[Acas](#) explains how we think can depend on our life experiences and sometimes we have beliefs and views about other people that might not be right or reasonable. This is known as '**unconscious bias**' or '**implicit bias**' and includes when a person thinks:

- better of someone because they believe they're alike
- less of someone because that person is different to them, for example, they might be of a different race, religion or age.

- If the employer uses a recruitment agency, are they confident that they also comply fully with the equality laws and the employer's equality and diversity policies and procedures?
- Will the employer agree to avoid the use of all forms of casual work and zero-hours contracts? Do they recognise the barriers they produce for job seekers, and are they aware of the potential problems for their organisation created by offering insecure work?

The [Work Foundation](#) has found that "ethnic minority workers are more likely to be in severely insecure work than white workers (24% versus 19%). Men from ethnic minority backgrounds are 10 percentage points more likely to experience severely insecure work compared to white men (23% versus 13%)." Many Black job seekers find themselves working for fewer hours than they would like, for a shorter duration than they would like, and with much worse terms and conditions.

- Are all posts advertised as open to flexible working to encourage more Black people, particularly Black women, to apply for work, remain in work and progress? Has a review been carried out of where vacant posts are advertised?

'[Who Cares?](#)' research from Business in the Community (BITC) shows that "Black, Asian, Mixed Race and other ethnically diverse" people were significantly more likely than others not to have applied for a job or promotion, or to have considered leaving or actually left a job, because of challenges combining paid work and care.

- How are training opportunities advertised to staff? Is it open access? Is the training and development programme truly accessible to all employees equally?
- How are promotions, secondments or acting up and career progression opportunities made known to staff? Is it open access or does it depend on who you know?
- When considering fair recruitment and selection procedures, does the employer include internships and apprenticeships?
- Does the employer operate a graduate recruitment programme? What is the take-up of Black applicants and those successful in being recruited?
- If Black people are shown to experience disadvantage during recruitment exercises and continue to be under-represented in the workforce despite measures undertaken, will the employer consider positive action in the recruitment and selection process?

Under employment legislation, employers cannot positively discriminate in favour of Black workers. However, **positive action** is allowed. It means taking specific steps to improve equality in the workplace, by meeting the particular needs of Black workers, lessening a disadvantage they might experience or increasing their participation in a particular activity. More information: Equality and Human Rights Commission '[What is positive action in the workplace?](#)'