

SC-WRES Improvement Programme: highlighting the challenges and driving action



Background:

Nyoka Fothergill, Head of Service Delivery (Community Social Work) at Leeds City Council, embarked on the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) Improvement Programme across adult and children's social care services. Recognising the importance of leadership support, Nyoka was fortunate to have senior leaders committed to the agenda of race equality within the organisation. Despite the diverse workforce, it was evident that representation was lacking, particularly in leadership positions.

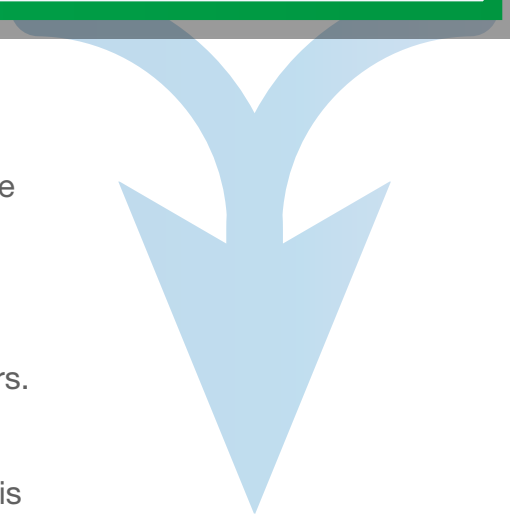


Challenge:

The local authority faced significant challenges in addressing race inequality within its workforce. Despite the visible lack of representation, there was a need to move beyond merely acknowledging the problem and take concrete steps towards fostering inclusivity and diversity. The data collected against the nine SC-WRES indicators offered definite proof of this lack of representation which couldn't be ignored. Nyoka recognised that staff networks had been advocating for change for years, but their voices hadn't been fully heard. Based on the findings of the SC-WRES and the acknowledgement of this lack of representation, the authority concluded that change was necessary in the social care functions and across the broader organisation.

Action:

To address these challenges, the local authority took a proactive approach, involving staff networks, corporate human resources (HR) colleagues, and an independent consultant. Nyoka and her team recognised the importance of engaging with those directly affected by race inequality, leading to listening circles and one-to-one sessions to gather feedback from staff members. An independent consultant was brought in to review HR policies and identify cultural and behavioural barriers hindering progress, specifically focusing on recruitment and selection. This collaborative approach, in addition to the data gathered from the nine SC-WRES indicators, resulted in the formulation of an action plan jointly developed with corporate colleagues to ensure equity across the entire local authority, not just within social care.



Impact:

The commitment to the SC-WRES Improvement Programme and the subsequent actions taken by Leeds City Council have had a big impact on the organisation. By prioritising staff feedback and involving key stakeholders in the decision-making process, they have taken the first steps towards a culture of increased inclusivity and diversity. The introduction of mandatory equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) training for managers, with a focus on race within social care, has been implemented to ensure those of ethnically diverse backgrounds receive proper appraisals and development plans within their roles. The emphasis on visible change and representation in leadership positions has provided motivation and inspiration for staff members from diverse backgrounds.

Overall, Nyoka and her team have navigated challenges related to race with determination, resulting in tangible improvements within the organisation. Through their collaborative efforts and commitment to achieving race equity, they have set a precedent for meaningful change in their local authority that is likely to continue delivering value into the future.

Nyoka Fothergill, Head of Service Delivery (Community Social Work), said:

I'm really proud to be in this space to be able to help shape that, not just for my own personal self, but for all the other staff and all the other social workers that will join our organisation and look up and think that they can get there too.

