

Policy Briefing Paper

Building competent and effective anti-racism infrastructure in Scotland.

Co-designing with racially minoritised communities in Scotland for the proposed Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland: a new anti-racism policy oversight and accountability infrastructure.

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Contents

Introduction	3
Context & About the Study	4
Main findings & how it is mapped into the recommendations of the AIGG	6
Conclusion	8

Introduction

This briefing provides an overview of the opinions and voice of people from marginalised communities when asked to consider an ambitious plan to bring anti-racism infrastructure into Scotland. This briefing is specifically for individuals engaged in policy because of how systemic racism can operate within this landscape.

The Anti-Racism Interim Governance Group (AIGG) established by Ministerial Appointment April 2022- September 2023 was formed to determine how best to create the infrastructure and determine collective ambition to bring about meaningful system change for those who experience racialised inequity.

The work to build anti-racism infrastructure was spurred on by the major events of 2020, including the disproportionate impact of COVID on those racially minoritised.

Community-led co-production is a key element within the proposed anti-racism infrastructure. Therefore in September 2022, the AIGG commissioned two Community Researchers to engage with racially minoritised people and communities in Scotland.

The task of this research was to build awareness that new anti racism infrastructure was being developed, hear from people about how the infrastructure could best work for them and in doing support the ambitions for co-design of Scotland's new anti-racism policy infrastructure – the Anti Racism Observatory for Scotland (AROS).

The aims of the research were to explore the:

- views and perspectives of people with lived experiences of racism with regard to how the AROS should be structured, function and governed
- diversities within, and the intersectional marginalisations experienced by racially minoritised people in Scotland

Context & About the Study

The Scottish Government accepted the recommendations from the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity, to establish an Anti-Racism Observatory in Scotland. This was in recognition of the need for a strategic and coherent anti-racism, approach to data, accountability, strategy, policy and its implementation.

A wide range of policy initiatives have been implemented in the last twenty years to create “race” equality but racialised inequity remains very present in Scotland.

Although the Anti-Racism Observatory will be new for Scotland, it builds on international work on understanding and implementing anti-racism governance, oversight and accountability structures.

Building anti racism practice means how the research was undertaken is just as important as the outcomes from the research.

The Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach chosen, was informed by the recognition that minoritised communities often possess significant goodwill, crucial knowledge and relevant expertise to inform sustainable policy solutions addressing their systemic marginalisation..

Importantly, the risks of harm caused to people from racialised communities by consistent and overwhelming numbers of studies exploring people’s lived experiences of racism was recognised. Furthermore the significant “consultation fatigue” expressed by racially minoritised people from participating in multiple consultations, often led by public sector bodies, that have inspired minimal tangible change was also recognised. This highlights the critical role played by policy processes in maintaining and perpetuating racialised trauma.

In light of the above, this study focused mainly on structural racism and the resultant racialised inequity in outcomes, not on people’s lived experiences of racism. To maintain this focus, the [video and flyer](#) outlined the structural actions taken for “race” equality in the past (e.g. governmental policies) and why they had not worked.

Multiple community and third sector organisations, including national and local “race” equality focused organisations, were approached to engage in this research and share participation opportunities through their networks. Participation opportunities were shared publicly (online) for individuals and organisation to take part. The full engagement process is [detailed here on](#)

[page 9](#). Materials to support information sharing about the developing plans also emphasised that community members' perspectives were important to embed accountability into the upcoming anti-racism infrastructure.

Therefore building on the principles of community engagement, in particular, co-production, designing the study itself involved community experts to ensure that the content, format and distribution methods were relevant and accessible to diverse racially minoritised people within communities.

The approach adopted echoes that of the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#) which states that the people of Scotland are supported and empowered to actively participate in the definition, design and delivery of their public services (from policy making to live service improvement). This means giving citizens, service staff, and public sector organisations the opportunity to be involved in designing the services and making them part of the design team.

Main findings & how it is mapped into the recommendations of the AIGG

The table below highlights how the findings from this [extensive community research](#) (which includes the views of hundreds of people of colour in Scotland) map to the recommendations of the AIGG about the infrastructure to be developed within the Anti Racism Observatory for Scotland.

What was heard	How AROS will act
<p>Lack of involvement and exploitation of community time & knowledge</p> <p>Participants highlighted that they wanted to be included and involved</p> <p>People wanted transparency in the work and payment of people involved.</p>	<p>Community & Co-production</p> <p>AIGG guidelines for the development of AROS will ensure that community members are involved in every aspect of work. There will be clear and transparent guidance on pay and appointment of staff, and participation in the work of AROS that will be co-created with community members. There will be paid opportunities for community members at every level of the organisation.</p>
<p>Lack of skills</p> <p>Participants highlighted the importance of public institutions understanding their experience and perspectives and wanted AROS to help train institutes to be better at this.</p> <p>People from communities also wanted opportunities to learn and to take part in research and policy.</p>	<p>Skills building - Community & Public Institutions</p> <p>AROS will work with experts to offer training and skills development for public institutions.</p> <p>AROS will work to ensure that there are inclusive and accessible opportunities for work-based learning and information on how to engage in research and how to access data.</p>
<p>Holding people to account</p> <p>People who responded said that they felt that the research and evidence isn't often acted on - and that it is impossible to track what happened to recommendations,, what if anything was implemented, whether it was effective or evaluated.</p> <p>Many people reported that a lack of follow-up was a significant barrier in addressing racism, especially after they had taken the time and energy to collect "evidence" and report racism.</p>	<p>Developing New Accountability Processes</p> <p>AROS have developed new processes that will begin to ensure recommendations and any policy implementations are more accessible to public tracking. This will help demonstrate what sanction or action is being taken on anti-racism and its evaluation of effectiveness.</p>

What was heard	How AROS will act
<p>Collecting and sharing Information</p> <p>People said that they were tired of being researched and wanted a place to bring together what had been done already. They especially wanted the work they had been involved in previously to be better shared.</p>	<p>An active repository</p> <p>AROS will create a physical and virtual space where people can find information and research. AROS will make sure that there is a place to locate community-created research alongside local authority and other public sector evidence and that this is all shared widely in a creative and accessible way.</p>
<p>Lack of voice, overview & safe spaces for discussion</p> <p>Participants wanted AROS to help with identifying and sharing best practices and research that ensured that their voices were heard. They wanted AROS to create safe spaces to explore critical issues affecting them.</p>	<p>Data & Research</p> <p>AROS will support research that helps identify best practices and AROS will undertake research that safely involves and listens to people with personal experiences of the issues being explored whilst retaining a focus on the systems and how the systems perpetuate and/or recreate them.</p>
<p>Misunderstanding & communication</p> <p>Participants highlighted that often people don't understand racism or how complex it is. Their experience is not always respected or believed.</p>	<p>Partnerships, public narrative & cultural engagement</p> <p>AROS will work to improve organisational and public understanding and provide resources that will help communication on this issue.</p> <p>It will proactively seek and link with local national and international best practice</p>
<p>Lack of trust and representation</p> <p>Participants were concerned about the lack of trust and lack of action by public institutions.</p>	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>AROS will advocate for fair and equal participation of all, ensuring individuals and academics from marginalised communities have an opportunity to engage in all aspects of AROS work and that the voice of the community is heard and involved in anti-racism accountability, data and governance.</p>

Conclusion

Significant effort was spent to clarify the difference between this research and previous “race” equality work. The focus shifted from the norm which usually explores experiences of racism- to scrutinising racialisation and racism within policy structures.

This critical shift is important. Anti-racism as actions and processes and rethinking of “business as usual” has by and large been overlooked or misunderstood in systemic processes. In short, current policies and policy processes have sought to create and seek so called “race” equality but not focused on addressing the systemic processes and mechanisms which create racialised inequity.

The people who participated know this as it is reflected in their responses. The work now is for the policy landscape and those in power to address this and in doing so learn how to operationalise anti-racism. Building the infrastructure with people adversely affected by racism The Anti- Racism Observatory for Scotland can help make this happen. It will begin to create opportunities for transformative systemic change through tackling the “upstream” issues rooted in the system and institutions using an anti-racism approach.