

# Public Sector Leadership Summit on Race Equality in Employment

## Summary

### Aim

The Scottish Government held the above summit to support public authorities and seek from them a commitment to make an assessment of their organisation's understanding of institutional racism and the structural barriers that may exist in their organisations; and to take forward the recommendations of the Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee around race equality in employment.

### Background

The Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee published an [inquiry report](#) last year on race equality, employment and skills, which came with a series of recommendations for public authorities to take forward to address race inequality in employment.

The Committee's evidence sessions demonstrated that whilst some public sector leaders were ready to begin talking about and tackling institutional racism, others were strongly in denial about its existence.

Within his response to the Committee, Jamie Hepburn MSP, the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills committed to hosting a public sector leadership summit on race equality in employment. The summit was held on 24 March and brought together Ministers, public authority leaders and race equality stakeholders.

The Summit included around 30 participants, chosen to best represent the spectrum of public sector leaders across Scotland. Invitees were asked to come with the knowledge to engage and cover the experience, practices and challenges across the range of organisations in their representative group. These groups included Health, Local Government, Education, Justice and Delivery Bodies<sup>1</sup>.

### Summit

The event was chaired by Director General for Communities, Paul Johnston, and included powerful reflections from the new Director for Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights, Madhu Malhotra, who spoke passionately about the need for leaders to "choose courage and vulnerability over comfort" and that "the systemic nature of inequalities requires a systemic response"

The second half saw David Wallace, Chief Executive of Social Security Scotland, talk candidly about race equality being "at a tipping point now". He further stated, "I'm not speaking today from an organisation that's got it right, but I am speaking from an organisation that is committed to learning the lessons and getting it right for the future."

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<sup>1</sup> Executive agencies and non-ministerial offices & departments

## Discussion Themes

A key element of the Summit included the breakout sessions. The sessions centred around identifying a common understanding of institutional racism and the barriers that may exist within organisations; and the reticence that may exist among those in leadership positions to discuss institutional racism. The sessions also sought practical solutions to key barriers identified across the sector.

There was significant commonality across the breakout sessions, which identified a wide variety of issues. These issues are categorised into the following themes:

- **Better understanding:** the need to understand institutional racism and how it can manifest in an organisation, the need for better data to understand the issues in organisations, and the need to use the data to implement practices that lead to positive changes.
- **Systemic change:** the need to work on multiple fronts simultaneously and change systems, practices and cultures, not just individual actions.
- **Collaboration:** involving the lived experience perspective, both internal and external, to shape and inform corporate action.

## Summit Outcome – Joint Commitment

The Summit unveiled a [joint commitment](#), which pledged the Scottish Government and public sector leaders to take action to advance equality for minority ethnic staff and service users. The Summit placed an urgency on public authorities to take forward this commitment, which includes:

1. taking forward the recommendations of the Committee;
2. embedding the recommendations into the strategic objectives of organisations and the performance objectives of senior leaders; and
3. making the commitment public-facing by publishing on organisations' websites and social media.

## Next Steps

A write-up of the summit has been produced and includes key themes and resources identified at the event. Public authorities and race equality stakeholders who were unable to attend the event will be given the opportunity to feed into this. The write-up, and resources therein, are intended to help support public authorities to honour the joint commitment. We will continue to support and urge public authorities to do this, as it represents a substantive step to advancing race equality in our organisations.

In collaboration with the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), the Scottish Government undertook to facilitate further engagement across the sector this year, which will be themed around the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's recommendations on race recruitment and retention, and the gathering and management of data. These events will also be an opportunity for organisations to discuss how they plan to take forward the joint commitment and raise any challenges or support required.