# TEMPLATE FOR A

# RACIAL EQUALITY ACTION PLAN



## NOTES FOR EMPLOYERS

### 1. HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE

This is an example of how you might draft a racial equality action plan for your organisation. You can base your own plan on this template and make amendments to suit your own particular circumstances, needs and objectives.

The names given to action plans, or to their associated policies, may vary from employer to employer. Some are called *Diversity plans and policies*, or *Diversity & Inclusion plans and policies*, or *Dignity-at-Work plans or policies*. There are no rules about the naming of them – the most important thing is their content - and it is for your organisation to choose which name you wish to use.

### 2. BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY’S RACE AT WORK CHARTER

This template action plan complements the [BITC’s Race at Work Charter](https://www.bitc.org.uk/race/#h-about-the-race-at-work-charter). If you have signed up to the Charter, you can use this template as a tool for organising and prioritising actions to fulfil the Charter’s commitments. You may also amend the template to reflect any particular commitments that derive from the Charter, or to reflect the language of the Charter, such as its references to ‘executive sponsors for race equality’ or ‘race inclusion allies’.

### 3. EQUALITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This template recommends that you should develop or review your equality policies and procedures, such as an Equal Opportunities Policy. Such policies should outline the protected equality grounds, including the ground of racial group, the rights of employees under it and, crucially, the responsibilities of both the employer and employees in respect of implementing it. Our advice on drafting or reviewing such policies is online at [Model Policies](https://www.equalityni.org/Employers-Service-Providers/Model-Policies).

### 4. ADVICE NOTES

This template contains [Advice Notes](#_ANNEX) that explain some of the terms that it uses. These are for information only and are in an [annex](#_ANNEX), or you can click on a link to each. They do not form part of the plan and you may delete them.

# [INSERT EMPLOYER’S NAME]

# RACIAL EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

## WHY ARE WE ADOPTING THIS ACTION PLAN?

We are an Equal Opportunities Employer and Service Provider. This means that-

* We aim to provide equality of opportunity in employment and in service provision to all persons in respect of all of the [protected equality grounds](https://www.equalityni.org/Legislation).
* We make good faith efforts to comply with the spirit and letter of the equality laws.
* We do not tolerate harassment on the protected equality grounds or bullying, and we continually work to ensure that our employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect in a harmonious environment that is open and welcoming to all.
* When making recruitment and selection decisions we aim to select the best person for the job and all decisions are made objectively and lawfully.
* We follow the same principles when making other employment-related policies and decisions, such as those relating to pay and benefits, opportunities for career development and training, flexible working arrangements, absence and performance management, and
* We work to ensure that our premises, our employment policies and practices, and the way in which we deliver our services do not exclude or disadvantage those of our employees, or potential employees, or our customers, or potential customers, who have disabilities.

As part of that broad commitment, this **Racial Equality Action Plan** sets out our commitments in relation to the protected ground of racial group for the purpose of promoting equality of opportunity between people of different racial group: [Advice Note 1 – meaning of racial group and racial grounds](#_ADVICE_NOTE_1:)

In order to take practical action to implement this commitment we have developed this Action Plan. It is a voluntary initiative designed to build on other policies and practices we have adopted to help promote equality of opportunity.

The Action Plan has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the equality laws in Northern Ireland, including the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (RRO), and with the good practice recommendations of the Equality Codes of Practice and with other good practice guidance issued by the Equality Commission.

The Action Plan will be implemented over the course of the next two *[or, three]* years.

# THE ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

## Demonstrating our commitment

**1.** Launch the Action Plan publicly: Our *[Chair / Chief Executive]* will launch this Action Plan to show that our *[board / senior management]* are fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity, combating discrimination and harassment on racial grounds and taking the actions that are outlined here.

**2.** Appoint a senior manager [board member or other senior manager] to implement it. Different persons may be appointed for different aspects, e.g., one person for the employment aspects and another person for the service-provision ones.

**3.** Establish a racial equality working group to include members of senior management, other staff members and trade unions. The group will help to implement the actions outlined here and will be consulted about and offer advice on the various policies and other actions as they develop and progress.

## Employment

**1.** Develop an Equal Opportunities Policy (or, policies) for employees *[or, review and update an existing policy]*.

**2.** Develop a Harassment Policy and Procedure for employees *[or, review and update an existing policy and procedure]*.

**3.** Develop and implement a programme of employment-related equal opportunities and harassment training for all staff.

**4.** Review job descriptions and performance management procedures to ensure that for all staff, but particularly for managers, these include the objective of implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and Harassment Policy and Procedure and any associated aims in other policies.

**5.** Develop a policy and procedure to collect equal opportunities monitoring data *[or, review and update an existing policy and procedure]*, to include an associated monitoring questionnaire, that reflects current best practice *[either generally or, particularly, to the category of racial group]*: [Advice Note 2 - Monitoring](#_ADVICE_NOTE_2:)

**6.** Conduct a survey of our employees’ attitudes to and awareness of how we promote equality opportunity, with particular focus given to recruitment, career progression, the working environment and pay and benefits *[either generally or, particularly, to the category of racial group]*.

**7.** Review the composition of our workforce and of our employment policies and practices in respect of the category of racial group, with particular focus given to recruitment, including the use of recruitment agencies, career progression, the working environment and pay and benefits: [Advice Note 3: Racial Equality Reviews](#_ADVICE_NOTE_3:_1)

**8.** Determine what lawful positive action we will take to better promote equality of opportunity in employment for people from different racial groups and to remove any barriers to achieving that goal. [Advice Note 4 - Positive Action](#_ADVICE_NOTE_4:)

As part of that exercise, we will set realistic targets for the fair level of representation amongst our job applicants and employees that we would reasonably expect for people from under-represented racial groups and we will set realistic timetables in which to reach these targets.

*[Note: If you have determined what positive action you will take, it would be helpful to list those proposed actions in your Action Plan]*

## Service provision

**1.** Develop an Equal Opportunities Policy (or, policies) for service-users *[or, to review and update an existing policy]*.

**2.** Develop and implement a programme of equal opportunities training for all staff in relation to service provision.

**3.** Conduct a survey of our service-users’ attitudes to and awareness of how we promote equality opportunity in service-provision *[either generally or particularly to the category of racial group]*.

**4.** Conduct a review of the racial group composition of our service-users and of our service-provision policies and practices in respect of the category of racial group.

**5.** Determine what lawful positive action we will take to better promote equality of opportunity for people from different racial groups in relation to the provision of our services.

## Review

**1.** Review and revise any policies and practices as necessary to enable us to better promote equality of opportunity between people of different racial group.

**2.** Review the operation of the action plan and decide whether to renew it with further actions, such as an outline of any positive action that will be taken in subsequent years.

# TIMETABLE

## ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN DURING YEAR 1

### By end of time period Actions completed

31 January (1) To have launched our action plan.

(2) To have appointed a senior person (or, persons) to drive forward its implementation.

(3) To have established the racial equality advisory group.

**28 February** To have developed an Equal Opportunities Policy (or, policies) for employees and service-users *[or, to have reviewed and updated an existing policy]*

**31 March** To have developed a Harassment Policy and Procedure for employees *[or, to have reviewed and updated an existing policy]*

**31 May** To have reviewed job descriptions and performance management procedures to ensure that there is clarity with regard the role of managers/supervisors in implementing the Equal Opportunities Policy and Harassment Policy and Procedure and any associated aims in other policies, and to have made any necessary revisions.

**30 June** To have developed a programme of employment-related equal opportunities and harassment training for all.

**30 July** To have developed *[or, reviewed]* the Company’s equal opportunities monitoring procedures, including our associated equal opportunities monitoring questionnaire.

**31 August** To have completed the survey of our employees’ attitudes to and awareness of how we promote equality opportunity in employment.

**31 December** To have delivered the programme of employment-related equal opportunities and harassment training for all staff.

## ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN DURING YEAR 2

### By end of time period Actions completed

**28 February** To have completed the review of the composition of the Company’s workforce and of our recruitment and employment policies and practices.

**30 May** To have determined what lawful positive action we will take to better promote equality of opportunity in employment.

**30 September** To have completed the survey of our service-users’ attitudes to and awareness of how we promote equality opportunity in service-provision.

**31 October** To have completed the review of the composition of the Company’s service-users and our service-provision policies and practices.

**31 December** To have developed a programme of equal opportunities training for all staff in relation to service provision.

## ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN DURING YEAR 3

### By end of time period Actions completed

**30 June** To have delivered the programme of equal opportunities training to all staff in relation to service-provision

**31 October** To have reviewed and revised any policies and practices as necessary to enable us to better promote equality of opportunity.

**31 December** To have reviewed the operation of the action plan and to have concluded whether to renew it with further actions.

## ANNEX

### ADVICE NOTE **1: MEANING OF RACIAL GROUP AND RACIAL GROUNDS**

The term **racial group** is defined in the [Race Relations (NI) Order 1997](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/article/5) (RRO) as being: **a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins** and **includes the Irish Traveller community**.

The RRO defines **racial grounds** as meaning any of the following grounds: **colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins** and **includes the grounds of belonging to the Irish Traveller community**.

### ADVICE NOTE **2:** MONITORING

It is good practice for employers to monitor the composition of their workforces and the impact of their employment policies and practices on people from different racial groups.

When setting-up their own monitoring arrangements for this purpose, employers have considerable discretion in how they may do this. They may take account of their own size and resources and tailor their arrangements accordingly.

For more detailed advice on monitoring, including how to draft appropriate questions for use in a questionnaire, the Equality Commission has published separate guidance.

Public authority employers who are obliged to comply with [section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998](https://www.equalityni.org/S75duties), a duty which includes a racial equality goal, are already likely to have arrangements for monitoring in place, deriving from their approved equality schemes. Such public bodies should continue to refer to their equality schemes in relation to these obligations and arrangements.

Employers should also consider how to ensure compliance with the data protection laws. Further guidance on equality monitoring may be obtained from the [Information Commissioner’s Office](https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/who-we-are/northern-ireland-office/).

### ADVICE NOTE 3: RACIAL EQUALITY REVIEWS

Reviewing monitoring data and staff surveys will help you to understand what you are doing well in terms of providing equal opportunities to people of different racial groups and what you might be able to improve on.

Reviewing monitoring information is the most important part of a monitoring process, a fact that is often overlooked. It is the main purpose for collecting monitoring data and a failure to review the data is likely to breach data protection law.

The RRO does not prescribe or suggest any particular method for doing such reviews, therefore, when setting-up your own arrangements, you should take account of your own particular circumstances, such as available resources.

A reasonable methodology for conducting such reviews is one used by many employers already: that is, the triennial reviews of the composition of their workforces and of their employment policies in respect of community background that many employers are required to do under *article 55 of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998*. It is a useful starting point for considering what methodology you might adopt in relation to the racial group categories.

The Equality Commission has published [guidance on conducting article 55 reviews](https://www.equalityni.org/A55review). It can guide you to ask appropriate questions to probe whether people from different groups are being afforded equality of opportunity and it can help to identify any specific employment practices which may be causing barriers to the provision of equality of opportunity.

When reviewing racial group monitoring information, some employers may find it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from quantitative analyses of the data. Much may depend on the size of employers’ respective workforces, and on the relative numbers of job applicants and employees in the different racial groups for which monitoring data is held and on the relative numbers of people from different racial groups who reside in particular catchment areas.

In such circumstances, employers may find that qualitative data, such as feedback from staff surveys or leaving interviews, is a useful source of information.

It is particularly important that you examine your employment practices, especially your recruitment processes. For example, you should compare the applicant rates in recruitment and promotion exercises for people from different racial groups to their corresponding appointee and promotion rates – this may reveal trends, or relative success rates, in recruitment and promotion for each group.

That, in turn, should lead you to consider certain questions: e.g., are job criteria strictly job-related and how do they align to the job duties? Are English language requirements really essential for the job in question? Do you properly recognise qualifications gained outside the UK and Ireland?

You should also examine how your working arrangements (e.g., hours and times of work, breaks and holidays, food served in canteens, food storage facilities) operate and whether those reasonably accommodate all employees’ cultural, dietary or religious needs.

Also, consider whether the working environment (e.g., the language in which contractual documents and employment policies are written, dress codes, how employees treat and speak to each other or engage in so-called ‘banter’) may affect people of different racial groups. Is the environment welcoming to all? What does any data on complaints or grievances indicate? What do the responses in ‘leavers’ interviews’ indicate?

### ADVICE NOTE 4: POSITIVE ACTION

At one level, positive action may simply mean removing procedural or attitudinal barriers that deny people of particular racial groups equality of opportunity with others: For example-

* **making it clear that you will not tolerate harassment on racial grounds and by taking reasonably practicable steps to achieve that goal, such as by providing appropriate training to staff,**
* **ensuring that recruitment is open and welcoming to all, such as by advertising all job vacancies widely, and**
* **ensuring that recruitment procedures are fair and are fairly applied, such as by ensuring that job selection criteria are strictly job-related and do not unfairly disadvantage people of particular racial groups, and by providing appropriate training on fair recruitment procedures to relevant staff.**

Such measures benefit everyone in all racial groups; indeed, they benefit everyone in all other protected equality groups too.

At another level, some forms of positive action may have an outward focus involving an element of ‘outreach’ to people of particular racial groups with a view to encouraging their greater participation in the workplace.

These could include actions such as:

* **using welcoming statements in job advertisements targeted at members of those racial groups**
* **providing facilities for vocational education, training or mentoring exclusively to members of those racial groups.**

**Note** – Before these two actions may be taken certain pre-conditions must exist – see below for further information.

* **reserving a number of jobs to be filled by unemployed persons only (e.g., for those persons who have been unemployed for a set period of time, such as 6 or 12 months, etc.),**

**Note** - This action is permitted by [article 36A of the RRO](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/article/36A). The opportunities must be open to all unemployed persons who meet the criterion, and no distinction must be made between people on racial grounds. Nevertheless, the action may indirectly provide better opportunities for employment to the members of those racial groups that are particularly vulnerable to unemployment.

* **providing “welcoming packs” to newly arrived migrant workers in appropriate languages to support their welfare,**

**Note** - This action is permitted by [article 35 of the RRO](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/article/35) which allows employers and others to afford persons of a particular racial group access to facilities or services to meet the special needs of members of that group in regard to their education, training or welfare, or any ancillary benefits.

* **establishing support networks or racial equality ‘champions’ or ‘allies’ in the workplace,**

**Note** - Those actions are permitted by [article 35 of the RRO](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1997/869/article/35) too.

* **establishing a system of ‘reverse’ mentors,**

**Note** - This is where an employee from a one racial group (usually a non-manager with an ethnic minority background) mentors an employee from another racial group (usually a member of senior management from a majority group) to share their knowledge and experiences. The aim is to raise the senior manager’s awareness of the experiences of members of other racial groups, such as the barriers they may face which may deny them full equality of opportunity.

* **sponsoring sports and other cultural activities associated with those racial groups**
* **setting targets for the fair level of representation that it would reasonably be expected for such groups to have in a particular workplace and realistic timetables in which to reach them.**

It is important to note that certain measures that employers may contemplate taking might be unlawful and, therefore, should not be taken. In addition, some other potential action measures require special justification before they may be taken; that is, there are certain pre-conditions that must be met. These are-

**1. Do not appoint people to jobs on the basis of their racial group**

Employers may set targets reflecting what they may consider to be fair levels of representation in their workforce for the members of different racial groups and that they may hope to achieve eventually. But any actions taken to achieve such targets must be lawful.

For example, it would be unlawful to set aside a number of jobs to be filled only by people from a particular racial group, such as an under-represented group, in an effort to increase their levels of representation in the workforce.

**Job vacancies should be filled through open competition and with fair selection procedures.**

**2. When is special justification needed?**

Special justification, i.e., a certain pre-condition that must be met, is required for actions that-

* **encourage members of particular racial groups to apply for job vacancies in a particular workplace (e.g., using “welcoming statements” targeted only at members of those groups), or that**
* **provide only to members of a particular racial group exclusive facilities for education or training which would help to fit them for work in that workplace (e.g., vocational education or training, grants for the same, or occupational mentoring).**

The pre-condition that must be met is that in your workplace and within the past 12 months there were no members of the particular racial group working there, or that their numbers were comparatively small.

Even if there are adequate numbers of persons from that racial group in your workforce as a whole, training facilities could still be exclusively provided to that group if there are no members of it, or comparatively few of them, working in a particular occupation within the workplace.

You do not need the Equality Commission’s permission to take ‘outreach’ positive action, but it would be prudent to seek our advice before doing so for reassurance that your intended actions would be lawful.