

# Anti-racism Action Plan for Social Work



## Introduction

The Scottish Government published an Anti-racism Action Plan for the Scottish Social Work Sector in August. The Action Plan sets out what the sector will do to make social work actively anti-racist. It was produced by the Social Work Anti-Racism Oversight Group which includes UNISON. This briefing provides an overview of the Action Plan.

## Context

A commitment to anti-racism is informing the work to establish a National Social Work Agency (NSWA) and to develop a Scottish Social Work Partnership (involving COSLA, Social Work Scotland and the Scottish Government).

The Scottish Government set up a **Social Work Anti-Racism Oversight Group** in 2023. It comprises 22 sector organisations representing social work education and training, management, regulation, delivery and the workforce.

The Oversight Group published a [Statement of Intent](#) in November 2024, setting out a commitment and vision for removing racism and discrimination from social work in Scotland. It was "...intended to be a resolute step towards dismantling institutional and systemic racism." The first National Survey on Racism, to gather the views and experiences of social work staff, was conducted by iriss. The survey report, [No Room for Racism](#), was published in July 2025. Meanwhile toolkits to help organisations embed anti-racist practice are being produced.

**The Action Plan** - The four main aims are to:

1. **Improve management of racist incidents:** enhanced systems for reporting, recording, and addressing racist and discriminatory incidents, while supporting those affected.
2. **Foster anti-racist workplace cultures:** offer guidance and resources to employers to cultivate anti-racism within social work workplace cultures.
3. **Advance racial equality in social work leadership and workforce development:** tackle obstacles in recruitment, retention and career progression to make the workforce reflective of the population it serves.
4. **Promote cultural competence** in social work to redress institutional racism and ensure equitable outcomes for ethnic minorities.

## KEY POINTS:

- A commitment to anti-racism forms part of the development of a National Social Work Agency (due spring 2026).
- An Anti-racism Action Plan for the Social Work sector has been published.
- Actions will be carried out between 2025-2027.
- A Social Work Anti-Racism Oversight Group will oversee implementation and give regular progress reports to the National Social Work Agency.



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## Implementation

Four or five actions are identified for each of the four aims. A commitment is made to carry these out between 2025 – 2027.

## Monitoring progress

The Oversight Group will submit quarterly progress updates to the NSWA. A bi-annual national survey will be conducted to capture the experiences of those involved in delivering the Action Plan and to make sure that these feed into the assessment of progress.

Success will be measured through:

- greater representation of ethnic minority professionals in social work leadership roles.
- Improved incident reporting and resolution;
- Stronger workforce inclusivity;
- Enhanced engagement with stakeholders.

## Action for branches

- Please share this briefing with all of your members in Social Work.
- Please engage with your Black Members in Social Work on this Action Plan and raise the Anti-Racism Action Plan with your Social Work management for discussion.
- The management of racist incidents including improved systems for reporting, recording and addressing incidents is part of the Anti-Racism Action Plan. UNISON's [Violence at Work survey 2024](#) highlighted shortcomings with these. Please bring this Action Plan to your workplace Health & Safety Committees for discussion.

The Social Work Issues Group would welcome any feedback. A Radical Social Work Seminar on this topic is planned for later this year.

## Additional reading:

- [Anti-racism Action Plan for the Scottish Social Work Sector What we are going to do to make social work actively anti-racist - gov.scot](#)
- [Social Work Anti-racism Oversight Group: statement of intent - gov.scot](#)
- [Anti-Racism National Survey Report July 2025 No room for racism | Iriss](#)
- [UNISON Briefing 152 National Social Work Agency Update \(March 2025\)](#)
- [UNISON Scotland Violence at Work Report 2025](#)

