



BLG AFFILIATED ORGANISATION
CASE STUDY SERIES 2024

CASE STUDY
**SOUTH BANK
COLLEGES ANTI
RACISM**







Overview

South Bank Colleges is a mid-sized FE college in South London, which serves the local community and delivers both gateway and technical qualifications. Our geographical context presents us with both great opportunities as well as responsibilities: our students and staff come from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and we recognize that embracing this diversity is not just a virtue; it's our strategic imperative. We aim to be a catalyst for change within our community, inspiring our students and staff to become active, informed, and empathetic citizens who can make a positive impact in our society. The college developed a Black Leadership Programme for staff in 2021 and we were keen to continue our commitment to developing a more inclusive and equitable culture for students and staff. Our journey with the BLG began in Autumn 2022, when a cross section of staff came together for a workshop introducing us to the 10 Point Plan, which also gave us an opportunity to discuss the opportunities to embed and promote Anti Racism across the college and begin early action planning.

The project

Our aim was for everyone employed by the college to engage with Anti Racism through a training event that would give us a mutual starting point as an institution. We decided to warm up the college for this by asking Amarjit to deliver a presentation to all our staff at a CPD day in Spring 2023. In this presentation, Amarjit provided some background on the BLG's work as well as some of the national data relating to achievement, experience of education, and employment. On the same day, we released a survey for all our staff to gauge experiences, perceptions and feelings in relation to racism and race-based bias at the college. The survey was anonymous to encourage participation. Using the presentation as a warm-up provided a context for the training to be delivered later in the term and also allowed us to see our varying starting points. Releasing the survey at this point meant we could use the findings to inform the planning of the training sessions that would be delivered at the end of the summer term.

The next step was to put a call out for staff members interested in being a part of the anti-racism training team. It was important to us to be inclusive in this invitation – we wanted to reach staff members who perhaps wouldn't normally be involved in delivering training and make it clear that they would be fully supported. Eleven members of staff volunteered (a blend of teaching and non-teaching staff) and a training/planning day for them was arranged with the BLG. This was a really successful day, which included feedback from the results of the staff survey as well as more detail on the national picture. It also gave the team the chance to discuss fears or concerns about the training, as well as to start planning. It was important for us to create a training session as a group, which everyone bought into and felt comfortable with, as well as ensuring that a consistent experience was delivered across the college.

We arranged a subsequent planning day as a team to really nail down the session – this allowed us to script, rehearse and model how the different parts of the session would be delivered and the collaborative nature of this planning was brilliant. Making sure the session related to our own context as well as the national picture was crucial, as was making sure the session was dynamic as well as reflective and discursive. There were three objectives for the training session: to identify and discuss the difference between being non-racist and anti-racist; to understand the impact of racism on life chances, and to create an individual pledge to support the college's commitment to Anti Racism.

The training itself was delivered over 10 (2 hour) sessions across 2 days in July 2024, with the trainers pairing up, and our college staff spread across the 10 sessions. It was important for us to create a sense of continuity and at the end of the session we asked participants to write individual pledges for what they could do to make a difference as well as to contribute ideas for a college Anti-Racism Manifesto. After the session, we followed up by email with some supporting material on 'how to be an ally' and 'how to call out/call in bias'.

Outcomes and learnings

The feedback from the training itself in July was largely positive – it opened up conversations which otherwise would not have taken place between colleagues who would not normally cross paths. It brought the key data regarding life chances both locally and nationally to the attention of every staff member. It encouraged individual reflection and made Anti Racism centre stage during those days. But it would be disingenuous not to mention that the sessions also generated discomfort. We knew that this would be the case and our motto was that we all needed to get comfortable with feeling uncomfortable, whilst trying to ensure that everyone felt heard, respected and safe. This required bravery on the part of our training team particularly – all the planning in the world does not help when you are managing a range of emotions in the room, including your own. No two sessions were the same in terms of reception – interestingly the trainers felt that the sessions delivered to the larger groups were more successful than those delivered to smaller groups, noting that in the smaller groups people tended to take things more personally and be more defensive. When we de-briefed afterwards we also discussed the fact that issues relating to intersectionality also emerged from the sessions and will require further thought and training. We also realised that we should have given black staff members who felt they might find the training triggering an opportunity to discuss the contents in more detail in advance of the session. How to encourage more white staff-members to be a part of the training team is also something we would recommend other institutions thinking about – this was a weakness for us, and one commented on by some participants.

Afterwards/Following on

Using the contributions from the training sessions, an Anti-Racism Manifesto was drafted in Autumn 2023 and shared with staff for feedback. After feedback, the manifesto was finalised and taken to SLT and the Board of Trustees for approval and will shortly be published on our website. An action plan to help make the words of the Manifesto a reality is in the process of being created and we have already run training sessions for teachers on one of the threads relating to pedagogy (Diverse Perspectives), which will be repeated. For students, we have created an in-house college certificate on Allyship, which can be run by curriculum areas with materials prepared centrally for them. The plan next is to run follow up sessions on Anti Racism with staff at the end of the year to review how our individual pledges have gone. We recognise that our work on Anti Racism will never be complete or finished and it is important to approach planning knowing this – it cannot be a tick box exercise and training will never be a miracle cure. Regular reflection, dialogue and reviewing of systems, processes and pedagogy is essential and will certainly need to be on-going.



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