



**Improvement East**  
Eastern Region Sector Led Improvement

# **Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Diagnostic Report & Recommendations**

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## **Executive Summary**

Children's Services across the Eastern Region demonstrate meaningful commitment to anti-racist practice, anchored by the Eastern Region Anti-Racist Pledge and amplified through corporate EDI strategies, staff networks, targeted training, and use of Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard tools in eight out of eleven local authorities. Good practice is visible in many local areas through things, such as, leadership engagement, compulsory induction training, reflective spaces and mentoring, and policy review cycles.

However, implementation consistency and measurable impact remain the biggest challenges. Gaps include: uneven anti-racist leadership development, limited mandatory training coverage beyond general EDI, variable data capture/analysis (especially child-level disproportionality), non-systematic community co-production, and procurement alignment to anti-racist standards in several authorities. There is also insufficient race-specific content in HR data including exit interviews and uncertainty about psychological safety in some settings.

## **Scope & Method**

Scope: 11 Local Authorities — Southend-on-Sea, Central Bedfordshire, Essex, Luton, Peterborough, Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Bedford, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire.

Method: Synthesis of self-reported practice, governance, training, workforce initiatives, data use, policy processes, and areas for improvement mapped to the 8 regional pledges in the Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Diagnostic.

# Regional Snapshot

## A. Foundational Alignment & Tools

Area	Regional Position
<b>Eastern Region Anti-Racist Pledge</b>	Adopted region-wide as a baseline commitment.
<b>SC-WRES/WRES participation</b>	Yes: Southend, Essex, Peterborough, Thurrock, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire. No: Luton, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford.
<b>Corporate EDI strategies</b>	Present in most authorities; some have Children's Services-specific strategies/plans (e.g., Essex 2023–2028).

## B. Induction & Training (Pledge 3)

Authority	Anti-Racist Induction Status (Children's Services unless stated)
<b>Essex</b>	Compulsory anti-racist practice at induction (specialist-led).
<b>Thurrock</b>	Anti-racist standards discussed at induction; specific module in development.
<b>Southend</b>	Anti-racist training available; not fully compulsory at induction.
<b>Central Bedfordshire</b>	Mandatory EDI (annual refresh); anti-racism accessible; cultural humility for C&F staff.
<b>Peterborough</b>	Anti-racist module in digital offer; corporate induction including anti-racism launching Sept 2025.
<b>Hertfordshire</b>	Induction has D&I; no specific anti-racist induction yet.
<b>Norfolk</b>	Mandatory e-learning on anti-racism; targeted courses available.
<b>Bedford</b>	Organising training; no anti-racist induction yet.
<b>Suffolk</b>	Comprehensive equality modules; induction introduces REAP and networks.
<b>Cambridgeshire</b>	No current offer; under review via SC-WRES action plan.
<b>Luton</b>	E&D training includes anti-racism; charter adopted; action plan in development.

## C. Procurement & Partners (Pledge 7)

Alignment Level	Authorities
<b>Strong alignment (explicit anti-racist standards)</b>	Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Peterborough
<b>Partial alignment / EDI themes present</b>	Central Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Thurrock, Luton
<b>Not yet aligned / in development</b>	Southend, Essex, Bedford

# Regional Analysis by Pledge

## Pledge 1 — Demonstrate Anti-Racist Leadership

Governance boards/steering groups are common (e.g., Essex Anti-Racist Practice Board, Suffolk Strategic Equality & Inclusion Board). Staff networks provide voice pathways (Southend, Central Bedfordshire, Suffolk). Mentoring and leadership development exist in several councils (Suffolk, Norfolk, Central Bedfordshire, Southend, Luton).

### Gaps & risks:

- ❖ Inconsistent anti-racist leadership structures (reliance on general EDI boards in some areas).
- ❖ Limited leadership representation from global majority groups at senior levels (e.g., Hertfordshire identifies none at leadership level).
- ❖ Outcome measurement (e.g., progression rates, representation) often weak.
- ❖ Leadership training on anti-racist practice not consistently mandatory.

## Pledge 2 — Promote Anti-Racism (Workforce & Community Voice)

Race networks and safe spaces exist in most authorities (Southend REACH/Global Majority Group; Central Bedfordshire; Suffolk Black & Asian Staff Network). Reverse mentoring/Q&A between leaders and global majority staff in Essex and Suffolk. Anonymous reporting in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

### Gaps & risks:

- ❖ Variable depth of engagement and translation of feedback into action.
- ❖ Some authorities lack race-focused networks in Children's Services
- ❖ Metrics on outcomes from initiatives often absent.

## Pledge 3 — Educate & Raise Awareness

Strong exemplars (Essex compulsory induction; Suffolk/Norfolk practical workshops; Central Bedfordshire annual refresh). Several authorities rely on general EDI/unconscious bias rather than specific anti-racist practice modules.

### Gaps & risks:

- ❖ Induction inconsistency; anti-racist practice not uniformly compulsory.
- ❖ Practice application limited where training is primarily e-learning.
- ❖ Monitoring of completion/refresh uneven.

## Pledge 4 — Create Safe Spaces

Most authorities have dedicated staff networks and informal spaces (coffee mornings, peer groups). Psychological safety measures include TORs/confidentiality (Central Bedfordshire, Suffolk), anonymous feedback (Suffolk), and regular senior engagement (Norfolk, Southend).

### Gaps & risks:

- ❖ Absence of forums in some areas.
- ❖ Assurance of psychological safety is uneven.

## **Pledge 5 — Review & Revise Policies**

Systematic policy review with anti-racist lens exists in several councils (Southend external ED&I audit; Norfolk/QIA; Suffolk/REAP cycle). Essex bespoke anti-racist policies launched October 2025. Hertfordshire updated key HR policies; Peterborough review via CS board.

### **Gaps & risks:**

- ❖ Coverage gaps (not all policies reviewed; limited thematic anti-racist frameworks).
- ❖ Transparency of progress reporting varies.

## **Pledge 6 — Engage with the Community**

Examples of co-production and participation (Suffolk/Aspire Black Suffolk; Southend lived experience data; Essex sub-group for Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage young people; Norfolk thematic audits, Roma practice events; Peterborough youth participation; Hertfordshire migrant children sessions).

### **Gaps & risks:**

- ❖ Non-systematic engagement and feedback loops to children/families
- ❖ Limited demographic disaggregation in some participation datasets.

## **Pledge 7 — Hold Ourselves & Partners Accountable**

Most authorities participate in SC-WRES. Procurement alignment is strong in Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Peterborough; partial elsewhere.

### **Gaps & risks:**

- ❖ Inconsistent commissioning standards explicitly referencing anti-racism.
- ❖ Variable partner accountability mechanisms and KPI tracking.

## **Pledge 8 — Support Affected Individuals**

Policies exist for grievance/harassment; reporting systems in several councils (Central Bedfordshire, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk). Tailored wellbeing/reflective support noted (Peterborough, Norfolk, Thurrock, Suffolk). Specialist initiatives (Cambridgeshire disclosure app; Hertfordshire third-party harassment policy).

### **Gaps & risks:**

- ❖ Race-specific questions in exit interviews largely absent.
- ❖ Manager confidence to handle racism complaints varies; racial trauma awareness not universal.
- ❖ Formal mechanism lacking in some LAs.

# Recommendations to Inform 2026-27 Regional Anti-Racist Practice Development Plan:

These recommendations are informed by feedback and insights gathered through the Global Majority Forum, contributions from regional events, and the responses provided by the 11 local authorities to the Eastern Region diagnostic. They represent a foundation for further development.

## Accountability

- ❖ Develop a regional framework that defines minimum standards and sets out what good looks like in relation to the Pledge.
- ❖ Establish a bi-annual self-evaluation and peer-challenge process to assess progress against the Pledge.
- ❖ Produce an annual report summarising regional activity, impact, and areas for improvement.

## Implementation

- ❖ Agree a standardised data set for Children & Families services and HR, and collect and report on this annually.
- ❖ Identify opportunities for collaborative development under the Pledge—such as shared induction standards, consistent exit interview questions, and aligned workforce tools.
- ❖ Undertake a regional anti-racist practice survey specifically for Global Majority staff to understand experiences and inform improvement actions.

## Improving Practice

- ❖ Continue to deliver bi-monthly anti-racist practice webinars for colleagues across the region.
- ❖ Identify, share, and promote examples of effective practice to support learning and consistency across organisations.

## Communication and Engagement

- ❖ Continue to provide regional Global Majority Reflective Spaces
- ❖ Actively promote the Pledge through regional forums and communication channels to increase visibility and engagement.
- ❖ Ensure anti-racist practice features consistently across all regional networks and work programmes.

## Appendix A — Local Authority Highlights

- ❖ Southend-on-Sea: Corporate EDI strategy; inclusive leadership and CPD addressing white privilege; external ED&I audit; building anti-bullying/harassment policies via Global Majority feedback.
- ❖ Central Bedfordshire: ER pledge; UNISON Anti-Racism Charter; EDI strategy; annual EDI refresh; cultural humility; mentoring (BALI/Legacy); anonymous reporting; EDI supervision templates.
- ❖ Essex: 5-year Anti-Racist Practice Strategy (2023–2028); compulsory induction; one-day anti-racist training; unconscious bias; practice tools, audits, reflective forums; managerial webinars; bespoke policies due Oct 2025.
- ❖ Luton: Anti-Racist Charter (Sept 2024); action plan and tracker in development; revitalising Staff Diversity Group; systemic leadership programmes.
- ❖ Peterborough: Corporate EDI; reverse mentoring; ethical procurement with equality commitments; anti-racist module in digital offer; planning psychological safety e-learning.
- ❖ Thurrock: Anti-racist standards in induction; zero-tolerance guidance; ASYE anti-racist training; multilingual information; LSCP adopted ER pledge; investigations led by global majority colleagues.
- ❖ Hertfordshire: Engagement with SC-WRES; action plan; People Strategy promoting belonging; updated HR policies; third-party harassment policy; leading regional child-level comparison (starting with CLA).
- ❖ Norfolk: Council-wide EDI objectives (2023–2026); mandatory anti-racism e-learning; leadership tools; ‘Wobble Conversations’; thematic audits; commissioning alignment beyond compliance.
- ❖ Bedford: Working to an anti-racist plan (not yet council-wide); needs to initiate policy review, community engagement, data and induction modules.
- ❖ Suffolk: Race Equality Action Plan; UNISON charter; co-production with Black & Asian staff networks; Mandela supervision model; safe spaces; inclusive feedback tools; research partnerships.
- ❖ Cambridgeshire: EDI strategy underpinning practice; Inclusion for All framework; SC-WRES action plan reviewing induction; Global Majority Peer Support Group; strengthening disproportionality analytics.