SHADES of BIAS

Reflective case study template

Shades of Bias (SoB) is a case study template designed to help document and analyse discriminatory/oppressive/racist incidents effectively. Case study examples can be provided either from the perspective of victims/survivors of bias, observers/witnesses or the person/people responsible for the bias.

Please provide as much detail as possible whilst maintaining appropriate anonymity, confidentiality and sensitivity.

It may be helpful to read the associated SoB guidance before completing this template.

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1. **Case study title:**
   - *A brief descriptive title. For example: 'Discriminatory language used by a senior manager' or 'Inadequate adjustments made for a physically disabled colleague'*

(20 words max)

Observing racism in a team meeting

2. **Background and context:**
   - *Whose perspective is this case study written from?*
   - *Date of the incident (approximate or exact)*
   - *Location. For example: workplace, university, professional event, online etc*
   - *Setting. For example: team meeting, supervision, face-to-face interaction, training session etc*
   - *People involved. For example: anonymised service-user/lived experience/expert by experience, manager, colleague etc)*
   - *Relevant policies/protocols. For example: anti-racism policy, EDI framework, complaints process etc)*
   - *What prior experiences or organisational culture may have influenced the incident?*
   - *Were there any signs or indicators that the incident might occur? If so, what were they?*

(100 words max)

I am putting myself in the position of a social worker who was in the virtual team meeting and observed the comments and behaviours of the managers and other workers, but didn't intervene.

3. **Nature of the incident:**
   - *Describe the incident as clearly and factually as possible*
   - *Was the racism covert (microaggressions, exclusion, unconscious bias) or overt (racial slurs, harassment, direct discrimination)?*
   - *Was the racism internalised, interpersonal, institutional, medical and/or structural?*
   - *Were any other forms of discrimination/oppression present from an intersectionality perspective?*
   - *What was the immediate impact on you or others involved?*
   - *How did the incident affect the dynamics within the team or organisation?*
   - *Were there any specific phrases or actions that stood out as particularly harmful or impactful?*
   - *How did the incident reflect broader societal issues related to race, discrimination and oppression?*
   - *What emotions did you and others involved feel before/during/after the incident?*
   - *How did the incident affect your professional relationships?*

- *Did you notice any changes in team morale or cohesion following the incident?*

(400 words max)

I observed a colleague raised valid concerns about a lack of culturally appropriate services for a person he is working with. The team manager said 'we mustn't make everything about race'. It felt really uncomfortable. It felt inappropriate for a manager to say this and to minimise what the worker was saying. We were talking about resource allocation and my colleague was making a valid and important point. it is really important that we cater for diverse needs. A few other people on the call appeared to agree with the manager. One member of staff rolled her eyes and my colleague who was raising the issue was shut down.

I really wanted to say something, but I'm quite new to the team and didn't really know what to say without coming across as confrontational. The person making the comments was the team manager and he appeared to be supported by other senior members of the team, so I felt intimidated. If I confronted the comments, would they take issue with me? Would I be seen as a trouble maker?

I have read about the term 'white saviour' and was worried that by stepping in, my colleague might think I was trying to 'rescue' him and I thought that this might make him feel more disempowered.

I hoped that someone else might step in and say something but nobody did. I felt deeply uncomfortable and embarrassed and hoped that my colleague wouldn't think that I shared the manager's and other workers' views.

The incident left me feeling a deep sense of discomfort. My colleague seemed really withdrawn afterwards and I felt guilty for not supporting him in the meeting. I didn't really know what to say.

I feel I may have made the wrong move in coming to this team. As social workers, we should demonstrate anti-oppressive practice and if this is not in place at the top of the organisation then it is encouraging poor practice.

4. <u>How was the situation handled?</u>

- *Who responded to the incident (if anyone)?*
- *What action(s) were taken at the time? For example: reported to HR, challenged informally, ignored, escalated, etc.*
- *Did the organisational policies/processes support an adequate and fair response?*
- *Was trade union advice and/or representation provided?*
- *What was the final outcome? For example: no action, disciplinary response, mediation, etc.*
- *Were there any barriers that prevented a more effective response to the incident?*
- *If you could change one aspect of how the situation was handled, what would it be and why?*

The manager made the worker feel that this was all about them, whereas the worker was simply highlighting failings. Other members of the team appeared to side with the manager. I have noticed in the past that comments about race related issues have been shut down.

Instead of shutting the conversation down, the manager should have forwarded the worker's observations on to the commissioning team to highlight this as a gap in local provision

(400 words max)

5. <u>Reflection and learning</u>

- *What could have been handled differently? For example: by you, colleagues, others involved or the organisation)*
- *How did this incident affect your professional confidence, mental health, or sense of belonging in the workplace?*
- *Has there been any follow-up action or commitment to change? If so, what?*
- *What structural/systemic issues contributed to this incident?*
- *Has the organisation taken any long-term corrective actions since the incident?*
- *Is there a timeline/deadline for implementation, investigation, resolutions and/or review?*
- *Key takeaways or recommendations for BASW*

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- *What personal biases or assumptions did this incident reveal in yourself or others?*
- *Could your own practice be adjusted to avoid similar incidents in the future?*
- *What role does self-care play in your response to incidents of racism, and how can it be prioritised?*
- *Was there any resources or specific support that was helpful to you?*
- *What advice would you give to someone encountering a similar situation in future?*

As an observer sometimes it is sometimes hard to know what to say and how to be a good ally, but by being too worried about saying the wrong thing, and ending up saying nothing, you are not being an ally.

When the perpetrator of racist comments is in a position of power it may feel more difficult to challenge. If it feels too difficult to challenge in the moment,

Despite it not being easy, as social workers we need to do the right thing, which is not necessarily the easiest thing. We should have the courage to support our colleague in the moment, maybe by simply agreeing with their observations, or asking the manager how we are catering for our diverse population and asking who would be the best person in the organisation to speak with about this.

In the future, I would have the courage to challenge, by asking the manager 'what do you mean by that?', or telling them 'I think they were raising a valid point, as it is important that service provision meets the needs of those accessing services '

In the future I would show allyship to the worker outside of the meeting by approaching them and validating the point they have raised.

I have now upskilled myself by reading my organisation's Equality Diversity and Inclusion policy. It states that workers should "Report discrimination, bullying, unfair treatment or harassment that they experience or witness" the policy includes details of how to contact HR, so I plan to do this to get some guidance.

I could raise what I have observed in supervision and complete a Shades of Bias reflection to highlight my reflections If there is a black workers network, I would ensure that my colleague was aware of the support they can provide

For workers observing situations such as this, in the future, I would remind them of the Social Work England Standards we sign up to:

As a social worker, I will:

6.1 Report allegations of harm and challenge and report exploitation and any dangerous, abusive or discriminatory behaviour or practice.

6.2 Reflect on my working environment and where necessary challenge practices, systems and processes to uphold Social Work England's professional standards.

6.5 Raise concerns about organisational wrongdoing and cultures of inappropriate and unsafe practice.

I would also highlight to them the BASW professional Capabilities Framework for a social worker including:

- *PCF1 - promote excellence in practice and raise and address issues of poor practice or inadequate working conditions for professional practice, internally through the organisation, and then independently if required.*
- *PCF2 - recognise and manage conflicting values and ethical dilemmas in practice, using supervision, team discussion and other professionally justifiable sources of support, questioning and challenging others, including those from other professions*
- *PCF4 - routinely integrate the principles of and entitlements to social justice, social inclusion and equality in my practice, and with support as needed, consider how and when challenge may be required*
- *PCF8 - explore, identify and communicate to supervisors and managers how organisational practice can improve to support better social work practice and citizen outcomes*
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(400 words max)

6. Reflection and learning (for the person/people responsible for the bias)

- *What was your initial rationale, justification or motivation for your action/inaction?*
- *How has this incident changed your approach to discrimination, racism and oppression?*
- *How do you think your actions were perceived by the victim(s) and others involved?*
- *Have you since recognised any unintended consequences of your actions?*
- *What steps will you take to repair harm and/or prevent future incidents?*
- *Is there a timeline/deadline for implementation, investigation, resolutions and/or review?*
- *Were your actions shaped by wider workplace culture, policies, or expectations? If so, how?*
- *Are there systemic or structural factors that may have enabled your behaviour?"*
- *What have you learned from reflecting on this incident?"*
- *What concrete steps will you take to change your approach to discrimination, racism and oppression moving forward?*

N/A

(400 words max)

7. Other comments or reflections

(300 words max)

Would you be willing to be contacted regarding your submission? If so, please confirm your name and email address below. These details will remain confidential.

Name (optional): _____

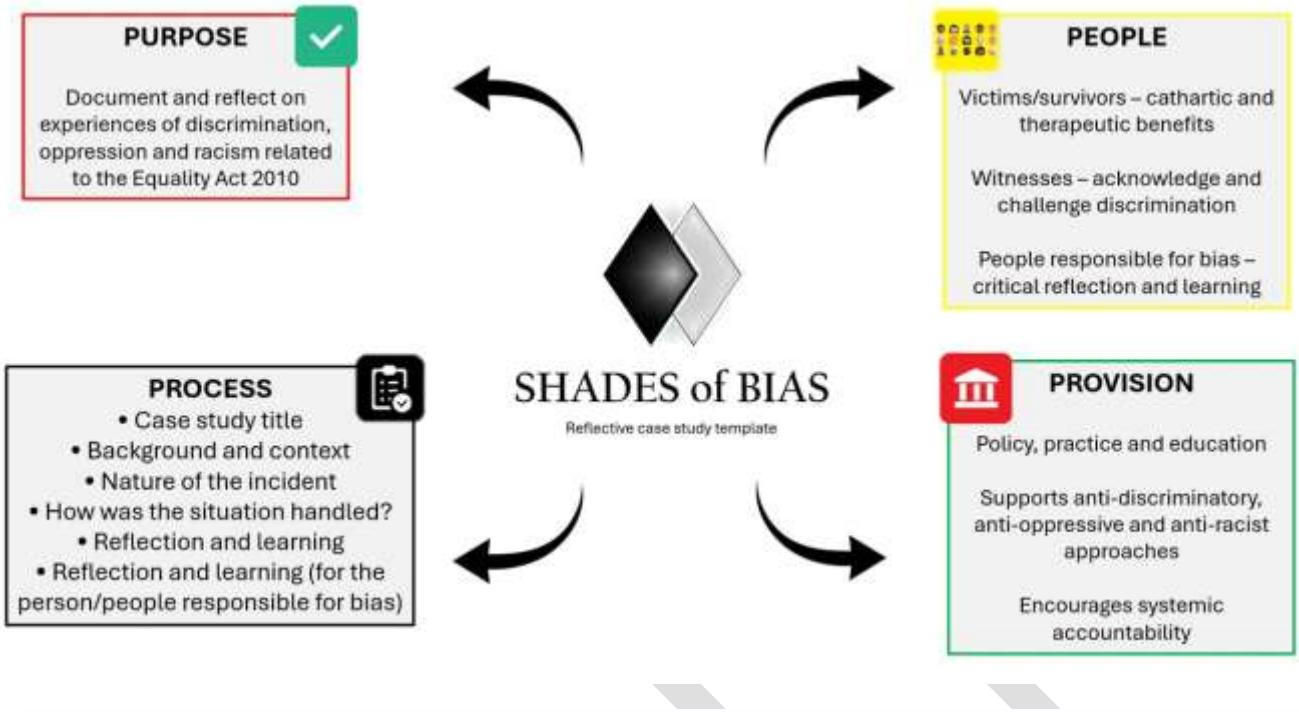
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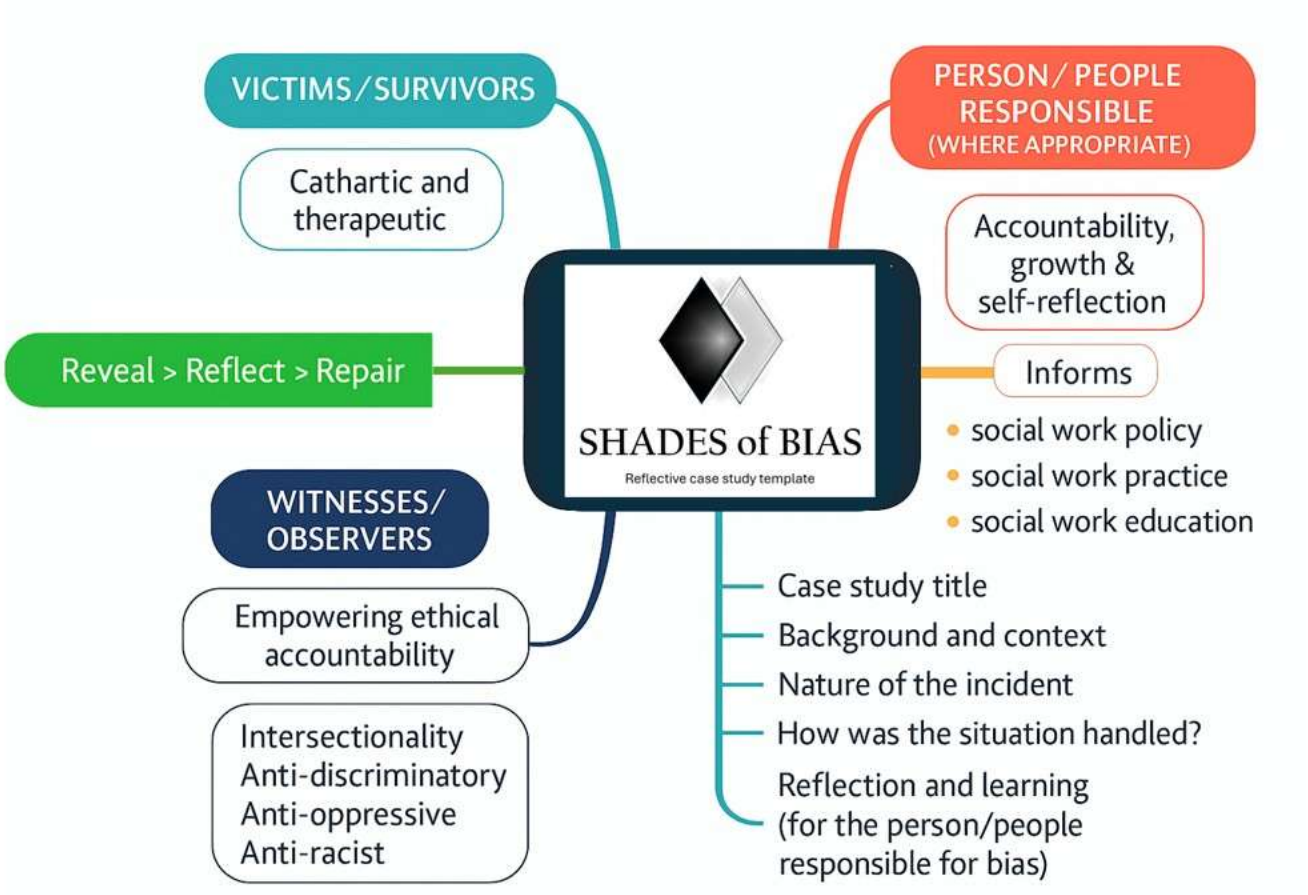
Email address (optional): _____

If you would like to share your case study with BASW England for collation and potential (anonymous) publication in the future, please send your completed form to wayne.reid@basw.co.uk.

Confidentiality Notice:
Please ensure all details remain anonymous. This form is designed to support constructive systemic change within the profession.

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PURPOSE
Document and reflect on experiences of discrimination, oppression and racism related to the Equality Act 2010
PEOPLE
Victims/survivors – cathartic and therapeutic benefits
Witnesses – acknowledge and challenge discrimination
People responsible for bias – critical reflection and learning
SHADES of BIAS
Reflective case study template
PROCESS
• Case study title
• Background and context
• Nature of the incident
• How was the situation handled?
• Reflection and learning
• Reflection and learning (for the person/people responsible for bias)
PROVISION
Policy, practice and education
Supports anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist approaches
Encourages systemic accountability


VICTIMS/SURVIVORS
Cathartic and therapeutic
PERSON/ PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE (WHERE APPROPRIATE)
Accountability, growth & self-reflection
Reveal > Reflect > Repair
SHADES of BIAS
Reflective case study template
Informs
social work policy
social work practice
social work education
WITNESSES/ OBSERVERS
Empowering ethical accountability
Intersectionality
Anti-discriminatory
Anti-oppressive
Anti-racist
Case study title
Background and context
Nature of the incident
How was the situation handled?
Reflection and learning (for the person/people responsible for bias)