

Addressing inequalities the role of staff race networks

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Prepared for Acas by

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About the contractor

Essex Business School is a champion of responsible management and sustainable business. It believes in using creativity and innovation to inform social change and drive organisations forward and make them better places to work and do business.

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Disclaimer

This report contains the views of the authors and does not represent the views of the Acas Council. Any errors or inaccuracies are the responsibility of the authors alone.

Executive summary

Introduction and background

In March 2021 Acas commissioned Essex Business School to undertake an Acas partnership research project on the role of staff race networks. This reflected increasing recognition of the importance of employee network groups, particularly race networks, in helping employers act on equality issues in the workplace, especially those around recruitment and progression. The growth in racism consciousness spawned by the Black Lives Matter political and social movement has renewed interest in the role of race networks in tackling ethnic inequities.

In commissioning the research on which this report is based, Acas was keen to support a research project that would engage with the coverage, prevalence and patterns of use of staff race networks and help develop an understanding of the roles of these networks in Britain today. The research sought to understand the aims of staff race networks and, engaging with better practice, the factors that underpin success in achieving those aims.

The research project began with a systematic literature review of workplace identity-based staff networks. This review helped to shape themes for exploration in a key part of the research approach: qualitative case studies in public and private sector organisations. The research was concerned with in-depth exploration of staff race network examples, engaging with dynamics, meanings and explanations for progress made were undertaken across eight organisations.

19 interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders (network chairs, human resources, senior managers, and trade unions). 7 focus groups with staff race network members. The case study organisations included a finance organisation in the private sector and central and local government, the NHS and fire services in the public sector and some engagement with public sector unions.

Findings from the evidence base on staff networks

A variety of terminology is used to describe staff networks, the main ones being 'staff network', 'employee network', 'staff forum', 'employee support group', 'employee resource group'. They are typically employer sponsored.

Identity-based networks can be organised formally and informally and try to address organisational inequalities. They have a focus on self-help as well as organisational change; and may try to promote a business case for that change. While staff networks may need to manage potential tensions in voice mechanisms, they can complement rather than be an alternative to existing democratic union institutions.

The evidence base suggests that identity-based networks may help address inequalities and a range of factors may be important to their success. These include; clarity of purpose; staff participation; adequate resourcing; a senior manager championing the network and building other organisational allies; as well as succession planning.

Staff race networks are under-researched, and the qualitative case study data gathered for this research report seeks to help address this gap.

Staff race networks: formation, organisation and reasons for joining

The murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter political and social movement was the catalyst for the formation, or re-launching, of staff race networks in most of the case study organisations that participated in this research. Examples emerged of senior managers getting behind these initiatives to try to foster more pro-active organisational engagement on ethnic inequities.

The impact of the pandemic on ethnic minority communities was also cited as a catalyst for the mobilisation of staff race networks. In terms of network priorities, the race networks had a social and 'business' side. While working to provide social, emotional, informational and developmental support to their members, ultimately they wanted to see progress on race equity, not least by fostering changes in organisational cultures and practices.

Both the network members and management in case study organisations have been behind an impetus for greater structure and formalisation of the networks. Members felt that formal organisation supported their views being taken more seriously. Formal network organisation and governance have common features across the case studies, including network chairs, executive committees, working

groups and executive sponsors.

Network chairs and co-chairs spoke of their passion for making a difference and wanting to fulfil the potential to foster organisational change. These network leaders also discussed how their network role allowed them to build leadership skills and experience that could be deployed in other roles in their organisation. An additional layer of leadership was provided by network executive committees, steering groups or boards, members of these structures feeding into discussion of priority areas. What helped these structures to work well appeared to be regular meetings and the mutual support provided by their members, who were reported to grow in confidence through their network activity.

Several networks have tried to reshape their governance structures to make them more strategic and agile. This is reflected in how network working groups arose as a vehicle for allowing grass-roots membership interests to come to fore, supporting members in working on issues that they were concerned about in a more strategic way. For example, engaging with the intersectional experiences of ethnic minority women. Most of the networks had sponsors or champions who were senior managers acting as a catalyst for promoting organisational change.

Network members became aware of the potential to join a workplace race network through often multipronged outreach approaches to potential network members. For example, information about the network in organisational newsletters and well-publicised network events. This could help to support network inclusion, countering any tendency for exclusion of members of staff based on assumptions about their identity.

A recurring reason for joining a network was the perception of ethnic inequalities and the desire to make a difference, exercising member agency, by helping to address structural racism in organisations. Network members voiced concerns about racist harassment and bullying, cultural insensitivity and micro-aggressions in organisational cultures.

Staff race networks were keen to be inclusive and were trying to be sensitive to member and potential member feedback in this regard. There were mixed views on the importance of staff race network names, included the use of the term 'BAME'. Some network members felt that the network name could have an impact on whether potential members felt that a network was for them; in other words, impacting on their sense of belonging. At the same time there was a concern that discussions about the network name should not detract from the pursuit of network objectives, albeit that fostering a sense of belonging was perceived as important, and the role of language use in this recognised.

Making an impact: network strategies and tactics

Network leaders and members participating in this research outlined a variety of strategies and tactics for pursuing their aims. These included:

- raising network visibility and supporting network member recruitment, often by organising events that engaged with the concerns of both network members and potential members
- initiatives to support network member inclusion and development by reaching out to wider network members and providing opportunities for them to develop network projects
- network members sharing common or lived experiences with each other helped them to feel less isolated and be themselves while building and expressing solidarity across network members. In addition, network members also felt that sharing their experiences with other organisational actors was a key way in which they could act as a critical friend to organisations: 'speaking truth to power'
- engaging senior managers by inviting them to network meetings provided a means of network members sharing their work experiences and concerns with senior leaders. These interactions also helped in building a relationship with those senior leaders and race champions, and fostering commitment to and momentum for change
- working with other allies: race network sponsors and champions were seen as key allies and there was evidence of networks opening up membership to any colleague who was keen to engage with race equity

- collaboration with other identity networks: developing dialogue and activities with intersectional sensitivity in recognition of the multiple and fluid identities of network members and how this helped to shaped colleagues' experiences and support needs
- working in partnership with trade unions: where trade unions were recognised it was important for race networks to build good relationships and solidarity with trade unions, both for individual representation and as an ally in the collective pursuit of race equity
- being outward looking and engaging with wider society: network members channelled their skills, expertise and interests to engage with race equity beyond the workplace. This reflected a commitment to race equity not only in their workplace but also in wider society
- making innovations in network structures to build cross-organisational networks, recognising common interests
- using technology to support network communications and interaction, particularly during the pandemic context
- fostering network sustainability was an additional area of network focus. Most of the networks seemed mindful of the importance of succession planning and saw the building of leadership teams as supportive of this

Network challenges

In pursuing their aims, networks perceived there to be a number of challenges, including resources. While organisations often provided facilities time for network leaders, this was invariably insufficient for the range of work that needed to be undertaken. The institutional invisibility of the time members invested in network activity made it difficult for the organisation to understand why network members required resources and the scale of the resource needs.

It was common for research participants to perceive that while progress had been made on race equity, some managers and parts of the organisation had bought into the race equity agenda more than others. Some line managers were perceived as complicit in an equalities implementation gap. For example, some managers were more supportive than others when it came to providing staff with time for network activities.

Network members in lower paid front line jobs working with the public on a day-to-day basis explained how they bore the brunt of unsupportive line management. Several research participants discussed how a zero-tolerance approach to racism should mean managers who were clearly not going to buy into organisational efforts to challenge racism and actively promote race equity should be seen as having an untenable position in the organisation; and asked to leave. In one case study organisation this had happened, in another there was disillusion as it had not happened.

Stereotypes were a problematic feature of organisational cultures, for example expressions of anger at social injustice being construed as aggression. A further challenge was a perception of a lack of accountability for progress on race equity, inhibiting the scope to challenge the status quo.

The effectiveness of network leaders was sometimes challenged by members, situated in a context of questioning the scope to achieve meaningful change. There were also concerns about network sustainability vis-à-vis the work overload and fatigue of network activists; and network commitments were being adjusted to be sensitive to such activist workloads.

Network success factors

While there were challenges, research participants perceived that, in the short-term, indicators of network success were embodied in a range of organisational change. A recurring theme across the staff race networks was a lack of translation of this change into harder outcomes particularly the addressing of the under-representation of ethnic minorities in senior management.

The short-term indicators of success included:

- more open conversations taking place at the workplace
- signs that senior leaders had bought into tackling racism
- perceptions of greater network engagement with non-ethnic minority allies

- other changes in equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice
- network members feeling empowered to foster change

Research participants highlighted a range of enablers of staff race network effectiveness in pursuing their aims:

- senior leadership support for staff race networks and senior managers taking responsibility for making progress on race equity was seen as of fundamental importance
- relationship building was also seen as key in meeting network aims for a more inclusive and fairer workplace. Good relationships between network leaders were perceived as important, but also between the network and senior leaders
- enlisting the support of allies spoke to the importance of all members of the organisation taking responsibility for progress on challenging racism and fostering race equity
- building confidence in talking about race, through experience of race conversations was also seen as pivotal to a race networks' prospects for changing organisational cultures for the better
- strong network leadership and resources to support that leadership matters
- succession planning for network leaders of the future was also perceived as key to supporting network sustainability

1. Introduction

In March 2021 Acas commissioned Essex Business School to undertake research on the role of staff race networks. This chapter provides an overview of the research background, aims, research methods and related ethical considerations.

1.1 Research background, aims and questions

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of employee network groups, particularly race networks, in helping employers act on equality issues in the workplace, especially those around recruitment and progression.

Black staff groups have long been identified as a successful intervention in tackling racism (Bhavnani, 2005) and the growth in racism consciousness spawned by Black Lives Matter political and social movement has renewed interest in the role of race networks in tackling ethnic inequities.

Acas commissioned a research project that would engage with the coverage, prevalence and patterns of use of staff race networks and help develop an understanding of the roles of these networks in Britain today. The research sought to understand the aims of staff race networks and, engaging with better practice, the factors that underpin success in achieving those aims. Reflecting these aims, the research engaged with the following research questions to support understanding of better practice:

1. What are the aims and objectives of staff race networks?
2. What kind of strategies and tactics do networks adopt in order to help achieve their aims?
3. How are these networks structured and organised?
4. What are the indicators of Staff Race Network success in helping to address racism and foster equity?
5. What are the enablers of successful staff race networks? In particular what supports greater equity in recruitment and progression? What supports the sustainability of staff race networks?
6. What challenges do staff race networks encounter and how might they be overcome?

1.2 Research design

The research began with a systematic literature review, conducting a search of the main academic databases to support a review of current knowledge of staff networks. The search engaged with the range of terminology used to describe networks including 'staff race network', 'employee network', 'staff forum', 'race network', 'Black network', 'BME network', 'employee support group', 'employee resource group' (see appendix 1).

Grey literature was also scoped which reinforced the variety of ways in which networks are described (see appendix 2). For example, in the private sector the retailers Sainsbury's Plc and Tesco Plc have Black Asian Minority Ethnic Network (BAME) networks. KPMG has multiple religion and race-related networks including an African and Caribbean Network, China Club, India Club, Jewish Society, Muslim Network and Sikh Network. In the public sector, North East London Foundation NHS Trust has an Ethnic Minority Network while Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust has a BME Staff network group. The BBC is an example of an organisation that has consciously moved away from the use of the terms BAME and BME, and instead has a race network called 'Embrace'.

While ethnic minority staff networks are under researched, there is a more developed literature on other identity-based networks which the review engaged with, for example Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual and Trans (LGBT) networks. Research by Stonewall provided numerous examples of LGBT networks operating in Britain, including the Royal Air Force's LGB&T Forum, the Goldman Sachs network group and Procter and Gamble's employee network (Stonewall, 2013). The literature review sought to draw out insights from identity-based network groups that might be relevant to the development of primary research with staff race networks.

The primary data collection for the present research focused specifically on staff race networks and involved a largely qualitative case study approach. Capturing experience in a range of sectors, the aim was to develop six case studies exploring the operation of staff race networks in the contemporary British workplace. Each case study was to consist of the following:

- stakeholder interviews with network chairs and co-chairs, race champions and senior managers with an ethical approach to leadership, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion leads in the human resource management function and trade union equality representatives
- a focus group with network members and, where possible, observation of a network meeting

1.3 Case study sample

Potential case study organisations and contacts were identified through a combination of literature search, liaising with Acas and other employer networks. Typically, research presentations were given to network meetings as part of the process of negotiating access to case study organisations.

The data collection took place from June to January 2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic context. Case study design was tailored to organisational contexts, including the degree to which organisations could input in a challenging climate. Focus group duration ranged from 63 to 101 minutes, and interviews from 26 to 124 minutes, reflecting varying participant and organisational time constraints. It was not uncommon for interviews to be undertaken in two parts, working around the work pressures and availability of research participants. Against the pandemic backdrop all data collection took place online using Zoom or MS Teams.

The achieved case study sample is summarised in Table 1a. Despite best efforts to achieve a more sectoral spread the achieved sample was public sector heavy. This perhaps reflected a more embedded, open culture around use of staff race networks in public sector contexts. Given that the research was more concerned with in-depth exploration of staff race network examples, engaging with dynamics, meanings and explanations for progress made, the sample composition did not detract from research insights and learning.

Table 1a: The achieved case study sample

Case	Sector	Data collection completed	Race network pseudonym
Case 1	Fire services	2 interviews with ex-chair of a union network and current chair of a staff network	Union network 1/ Staff Network 1
Case 2	Local government	1 interview with network chair, 1 interview with HR, 3 interviews with senior managers, 3 focus groups	CouncilCo

Case	Sector	Data collection completed	Race network pseudonym
Case 3	Public sector union	1 interview with union official	Union network 2
Case 4	Central government department	1 interview with Network co-chair, 1 interview with co-chair and network chair of cross-departmental race forum, 3 focus groups	Government department 1
Case 5	Finance	1 interview with HR manager, 1 interview with two Network co-chairs	FinanceCo
Case 6	Government department	1 interview with co-chairs, 1 focus group	Government department 2
Case 7	NHS Trust	2 interviews with network members	NHS Trust 1
Case 8	NHS Trust	1 interview with HR manager, 1 interview with senior manager/race champion, 2 interviews with network co-chairs	NHS Trust 2

1.4 Topic guides and data analysis

Interviews and focus groups took a semi-structured approach. Drawing on the evidence review, topic guides were designed to explore a similar range of themes with different stakeholders, including for example:

- how and why networks were formed
- how they are organised
- network achievements
- indicators of network success and levers for that success, exploring lessons for other networks
- any challenges being encountered by the networks

The topic guides are outlined in appendix 3.

All interviews were digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. A coding framework was developed and data analysis was undertaken using NVivo12 Qualitative Data Analysis Software. This assisted in the organisation of the data, supporting a structured approach to thematic analysis. The aim was to build a narrative of organisations' experience of staff race networks, engaging with the perceptions of a range of stakeholders. Thus, it was possible to explore individual perceptions and experiences alongside mapping the network journey that they conveyed.

1.5 Ethical considerations

The research proposal went through a process of ethical approval by the University of Essex. This entailed review of the approach to oral informed consent and confidentiality.

All participants were provided with information sheets about the research to support the process of securing informed consent. It was emphasised that all information collected from or about staff would be anonymised and kept confidential. As noted above (section 1.3), giving research presentations to case study organisations also supported the process of obtaining informed consent.

In this report the individual contributions of research participants are presented anonymously and organisational pseudonyms are used.

2. Staff networks: a literature review

Social networks can be disempowering as well as empowering, providing access to opportunities for some and reducing that access for others. Recent commentary has asked how we can review and revitalise voice mechanisms to build fairer, more inclusive workplaces (Barber, 2020). Research that reviews the purpose of staff ethnic minority networks, and explores their role in British workplaces, can help.

This chapter presents findings from a systematic literature review that examined staff networks and ethnic minority staff networks. The chapter begins by considering the nature of staff networks, including the forms that they take, why people join them and their main functions. It then explores the evidence base on factors that are involved in the success of staff networks. The chapter closes by considering the persistence of ethnic inequalities and increased contemporary interest in staff race networks.

2.1 Staff networks: purpose and functions?

As noted in the previous chapter, a variety of terminology is used to describe staff networks, the main ones being 'staff network', 'employee network', 'staff forum', 'employee support group', 'employee resource group'. They are typically employer sponsored.

Friedman and colleagues offer a four-part definition of staff network groups in the USA:

1. Organised based on social identity
2. Intra-organisational entities
3. Self-controlled and self-organised
4. Publicly recognised or formally organised

They try to address organisational inequalities and can focus on self-help as well as organisational change (Friedman et al, 2011).

Cenkci and colleagues describe Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), again with a focus on the USA, as voluntary groups of employees who share a common interest and encourage diversity and inclusion. They provide a mechanism of employee voice. While echoing Friedman's definition, Cenkci and colleagues suggest that the focus of these ERGs has been diversifying over the years from an interest in race and gender issues to other identity interests. Their study was based on qualitative research in a US retailer involving 17 interviews with ERG members looking at their role in enhancing work engagement and workplace inclusiveness. This reflects employers' interest in working with these groups to increase work engagement and increase motivation and productivity in work through group connection and support.

In addition to increasing workforce diversity, ERGs have had a focus on enhancing inclusion with a view to ensuring that employees feel valued and respected and have a sense of belonging.

Githens and Aragon (2009) present four types of LGBT networks through a typology that is perhaps applicable in other types of employee groups:

1. Conventional approaches (group established through employer, hence, they are concerned with organisational goals)
2. Internally responsive informal approaches (employees formed organically in response to needs within workplaces)
3. Organized unofficial approaches (groups form outside the employing organisations and often collaborate with unions)
4. Queer/radical approaches (with goals beyond the organisational level, working towards societal changes on equality issues)

The evidence suggests that staff networks do appear to have the potential to effect change on a number of levels, through the personal growth of individuals, via applying pressure for organisational change and also by advocating for change in wider society (see for example Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021).

Staff networks in the UK are often related to a company and organisation and they can also be cross organisational, in other words related to a profession; for example, the Black solicitors' network. Networks are typically organised around a protected equality group, for example women, Black and Minority Ethnic Staff, disability, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered staff, responding to particular needs (Inko-Tariah, 2015).

While often found in the UK public sector, for example in the National Health Service, local government, civil service and fire service (Tatli and Alasia, 2011; Colgan and McKearney, 2012), staff networks are also in evidence in the private sector, for example in retail, banking, construction and legal professions (Tatli and Alasia, 2011; Colgan and McKearney, 2012).

A YouGov poll commissioned for the present research suggested that staff race networks in Britain were most common in larger organisations with over 250 employees (Table 2a). Staff race networks were also reported to be present across a range of work industries (Table 2b). While a range of industry respondents reported that they used to have them but they were no longer active, there were signs of the development of new networks as well as longer standing ones that had been active for over five years.

Table 2a: Incidence of staff race networks by organisation size in Great Britain (June 2021)

Question asked: We'd now like to ask you about any Staff Race Networks at your organisation. A Staff Race Network involved a group of individuals known to be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic minority status who come together to share experiences, raise awareness and work towards change. Which of the following best describes your organisation's use of Staff Race Networks?

	Total	Micro-business (less than 10 employees)	Small (10 to 49 employees)	Medium (50 to 249 employees)	Large (250+ employees)	Net: Micro/ Small (less than 50 employees)	Net: SME (1 to 249 employees)
Un-weighted base	2030	789	373	298	570	1162	1460
Never had them	67%	93%	84%	71%	39%	90%	86%
Previously had them but no longer active	2%	0%	1%	3%	2%	1%	1%
Currently active, started less than a year	3%	1%	1%	2%	5%	1%	1%

	Total	Micro-business (less than 10 employees)	Small (10 to 49 employees)	Medium (50 to 249 employees)	Large (250+ employees)	Net: Micro/ Small (less than 50 employees)	Net: SME (1 to 249 employees)
Currently active, started from 1 to 5 years ago	7%	1%	3%	9%	14%	1%	3%
Currently active, started over 5 years ago	6%	0%	2%	4%	14%	1%	1%
Do not know	15%	5%	9%	12%	25%	7%	8%

(Source: YouGov polling data, June 2021)

Table 2b: The incidence of active staff race networks by main work industry

Work industry (main)	Un-weighted base	Never had them	Previously had them but no longer active	Currently active, started less than a year	Currently active, started 1 – 5 years ago	Currently active, started over 5 years ago	Do not know (%)
Manufacturing	244	67%	4%	1%	7%	5%	15%
Construction	187	69%	3%	4%	5%	1%	17%
Retail	226	78%	1%	2%	4%	3%	11%
Finance and accounting	235	54%	-	3%	10%	17%	16%
Hospitality and leisure	148	78%	3%	2%	3%	1%	12%
Legal	74	72%	1%	5%	12%	3%	7%
IT & telecoms	227	59%	0%	4%	13%	11%	13%

Work industry (main)	Un-weighted base	Never had them	Previously had them but no longer active	Currently active, started less than a year	Currently active, started 1 – 5 years ago	Currently active, started over 5 years ago	Donot know (%)
Media/ marketing/ advertising/ PR & sales	176	68%	-	5%	9%	4%	14%
Medical & health services	55	51%	-	5%	10%	12%	22%
Education	69	78%	2%	-	5%	-	15%
Transportation & distribution	52	63%	-	7%	6%	10%	14%
Real estate	35	91%	-	-	-	-	9%
Other	302	70%	2%	1%	5%	5%	16%

(Source: YouGov polling data, June 2021)

Staff networks can assume informal and formal organisational forms in support of their members (Inko-Tariah, 2015). In terms of the former they may involve members meeting on a regular basis to share and discuss both problems and their solutions. As regards the latter they may have a much more formal structure with a chair, executive committee and deliverables engaging with organisational policy and practice. Inko-Tariah (2015) also notes that staff networks can be virtual, with members connecting with each other on an ad hoc basis but nevertheless regularly sharing information with one another.

Employees can join staff networks for a variety of reasons. Friedman and Craig (2004) suggest that the reasons for joining network groups are not due to dissatisfaction and frustration among the staff but more for community identity and potential career opportunities arising from membership of the network groups. The active participation in the groups is also related to these perceived benefits.

It is also argued that senior staff are more likely to join the network groups because of the sense of security that this can provide. This is in contrast to the advocacy motives that might come into play in joining trade unions. A recent study into lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) employee networks in the UK National Health Service implied more advocacy motives, in finding that the majority of LGBT+ identifying employees joined for strategic reasons, to improve equity, though also to meet people who share similar identities (Einarsdottir, 2020).

Staff networks are seen by some as a new industrial relations actor in the UK (Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Healy and Oikelome, 2007). Colgan and McKearney (2012:360) suggest that 'the initial impetus for sexual orientation equality work in many organisations has been the activism of LGBT people and their allies'. Activism of this kind has often led to the formation of staff networks striving for equity (Colgan and McKearney, 2012).

A grass roots dynamic is also reflected in the work of Crouch and colleagues (2007). In the context of a growth of employee networks in Germany, these scholars discuss the emergence of an employee network at the Siemens Hofmannstraße plant in Munich, to support the resistance of redundancies. Defining the employee network as a bottom-up structure established based on humane needs and emotional attachment they suggest that rather than being designed to replace the union or Works Council, it was complementary.

In other words, the research highlights how the different workplace structures can complement each other's role in safeguarding employees' rights. An insight into this potential complementarity is provided by the work of Maks-Solomon and Drewry (2021).

Drawing on exploratory observational analysis these authors found that LGBT employee groups operating in large US corporations educated employers on LGBT rights. However, they also pressurised the corporations to engage in LGBT rights activism. There were boundaries to this pressure group activity. Maks-Solomon and Drewry (2021:131) suggest that ERG's shun 'aggressive lobbying tactics' as this 'would risk alienating other employees outside of their group and could backfire, making management resistant to the ERG's demands'.

While network strategies and tactics might perhaps be seen as restrained vis-a-vis the adoption of collective action, such evidence helps to build a picture of employee networks contributing to the momentum for organisational change in equality and inclusion in the corporate landscape.

Women-only networks have also played a valuable role in securing greater equity for women in management, for example in educational leadership (Pini et al., 2004). The strong support function of these networks has both practical and social implications for women in management and leadership positions (Colman, 2010; Villesèche and Josserand, 2017).

As already implied, evidence on LGBT experience of staff networks and from women-only networks indicates that they may have a number of functions (Table 2c). For example, they may allow members to share concerns and problems and provide support for those who need it (Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Villesèche and Josserand, 2017). Supporting mentoring to enable career progression has been widely identified as a network function (Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Colman 2010; Friedman and Craig, 2004; Gillespie et al, 2018; Green 2018; McPhee et al., 2017; Welbourne et al., 2017).

Friedman and Holtom (2002) analysed the benefits of staff networks and possible role of network groups in retaining minority employees, especially among managerial level positions. They emphasised that supporting and motivating managers from minority backgrounds to participate in network groups would help retain the managers and positively impact on the minority employees. The authors recommended the following:

1. Encourage and support minority employee network groups
2. To reduce minority employee turnover, focus on policies that enhance minority employee social embeddedness
3. Focus the activities and schedules of network groups on the needs of managerial-level employees
4. Provide employees with contacts to network group leaders at other companies, signal to employees that network groups are welcomed, and have top management attend some network group meetings
5. Encourage the most highly skilled employees to be leaders of network groups, and help them build contacts with experienced network group leaders in other companies
6. Encourage participation in network groups by top-level minority managers (Friedman and Holtom, 2002)

As will be seen later in this report, there is evidence to suggest that contemporary staff networks in Britain are often trying to engage with both managerial and non-managerial employees.

Table 2c: The functions of staff networks

Function of Staff (Identity-based) Networks	Source
Providing visibility	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Githens and Aragon, 2009; Green, 2018; Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021.
Social structure of organisations (building links between professional and social ties, providing social support, supporting community)	Friedman et al, 2011; Colgan, F. and McKearney, A; Colman, 2010; Pini et al., 2004; Cenkcı et al., 2019; Friedman and Craig, 2004; Githens and Aragon, 2009; McPhee et al., 2017.

Function of Staff (Identity-based) Networks	Source
A safe 'space' within which minority groups such as LGBT members could develop group identity, consciousness and develop strategies for change to the status quo	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Cenkci et al., 2019; Githens and Aragon, 2009; Gutierrez, 2021 (PhD thesis); McPhee et al., 2017; McGuire, 2012)
Increasing individual and collective voice to engage with their lived experience and organisational issues (e.g. policy development on recruitment)	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Hastings and Mansell, 2015; Colman, 2010; Pini et al. 2004; Gillespie et al, 2018; Green, 2018; Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021; Friedman and Holtom, 2002.
Members sit on organisation equality and diversity committees or panels; act as a sounding board for policy	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Hastings and Mansell, 2015.
Encouraging employer engagement in wider equalities initiatives (e.g. Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Athena Swan)	Colgan and McKearney, 2012 Gillespie et al, 2018; Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021; Duerme et al. 2021.
Training and development support	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Colman 2010; Friedman and Craig, 2004; Gillespie et al, 2018; Green, 2018; McPhee et al., 2017; Welbourne et al., 2017.
Sponsoring events	Friedman et al, 2011.
Support mentoring programmes	Colgan and McKearney, 2012; Colman 2010; Friedman and Craig, 2004; Gillespie et al, 2018; Green 2018; McPhee et al., 2017; Welbourne et al., 2017.
Broader advocacy/lobby on the issue beyond the organisational level	Githens and Aragon, 2009; Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021.
Prevent staff turnover and manage diversity, including hiring	Friedman and Holtom, 2002; Welbourne et al., 2017; Duerme et al. 2021; Gutierrez 2018.
Relationship between trade union and staff network or identity based caucuses	Garcia 2002.

2.2 Success factors in staff networks

There is evidence to suggest that staff networks can foster success in addressing inequalities (Tatli and Alasia, 2011; Colgan and McKearney, 2012). Inko-Tariah (2015) implies that staff networks are 'win-win', potentially bringing benefits to both network members and their employers. In this vein, she argues that staff networks are more important than they have ever been, but only if they can fulfil their potential (Inko-Tariah, 2015).

The evidence base suggests that a range of factors may be important in the success of staff networks. These include:

1. clarity of purpose
2. staff participation
3. adequate resourcing
4. a senior manager championing the network
5. succession planning

2.2.1 Clarity of purpose

Staff networks can pursue a variety of goals (Inko-Tariah, 2015). The kind of functions summarised in Table 2c, above, may vary depending on the purpose and functions of the network. For example, the network aims may include supporting communication between Senior Management and under-represented and marginalised groups fostering engagement with members' needs; both intrinsic and extrinsic and often linked to inequalities. They might also include community building, promoting network member values and cooperation.

2.2.2 The importance of participation of network members

There is no doubt that staff have a pivotal role to play in the success of staff networks (Tatli and Alasia, 2011). They need to participate in a range of activities to help breathe life into these organisational forms, supporting the building of momentum. For example, engaging in network meetings, working on strategy and engaging in initiatives and activities. As noted above, some of this activity may be about self-help, and some about organisational change.

Without staff participation, staff networks are unlikely to get off the ground in a meaningful way, let alone be sustainable. Einarsdottir and colleagues (2020) found that one fifth of members of LGBT+ employee networks in the NHS reported that they had left their network because there were too few members.

2.2.3 The importance of resources (including time allocation and time release)

The resources available for a staff network is likely to help shape its chances for success (Tatli and Alasia, 2011; Colgan and McKearney, 2012). For example, staff networks need to develop their terms of reference and require opportunities to meet on a regular basis.

Colgan and McKearney (2012) discuss resource concerns amongst the LGBT company networks that they researched. For example, not all LGBT people taking on leadership roles in staff networks were able to perform their role during working time and set related targets and activities with line managers as part of their performance appraisal process.

What Colgan and McKearney (2012: 369) describe as 'overload' could curtail the momentum of networks that were not resourced adequately. One result of this was that LGBT staff network membership was found to be skewed towards male, managerial and professional workers who were better able to secure time off for network activities.

Reinforcing this picture, Einarsdottir and colleagues (2020) found that two in three chairs of LGBT+ employee networks in the NHS had no formalised time allocation to carry out the necessary duties for their staff network. Two in five network chairs reported that they complete all network-related work on top of their normal working hours. Moreover, of the 34 people that Einarsdottir and colleagues (2020) found had left their staff network, more than three quarters indicated that this was because they had struggled to attend staff meetings.

Similarly, Hastings and Mansell (2015) note that the ability of LGBT networks to maintain momentum and grow in the Higher Education sector frequently relies upon volunteer organisers. These volunteers have no formal job description or workload remission for the time that they commit to staff networks. Required resources and line manager support, may be even more challenging to access during periods of austerity and recession when equality and other budgets are likely to be squeezed (Colgan and McKearney, 2012).

2.2.4 The importance of champions and allies

Having a high-level staff network champion is also likely to be important to network success (Hastings and Mansell, 2015; Inko-Tariah, 2015; Tatli and Alasia, 2011). The evidence suggests that champions help to increase network visibility, provide legitimacy, and improve access to resources. Cencki et.al (2019) highlight the importance of encouraging allies who support network aims vis-à-vis fostering equity.

Writing about LGBT staff networks in the Higher Education sector, Hastings and Mansell (2015) argue that many LGBT networks will survive on the basis of visible support from their universities at the most senior Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent) level.

2.2.5 Making a business case for change

Maks-Solomon and Drewry (2021:147) point out that employee groups act as a key vehicle for raising management awareness of the importance of 'different political struggles affecting marginalized people'. Hence networks may promote both a social justice and business case for change. These authors go further by suggesting that a business case for change is pivotal. They explain:

"Employee groups pressure their employers to advance the rights of marginalized people by using economic arguments that suggest that activism can help firms recruit customers and employees". (Maks-Solomon and Drewry, 2021: 147)

This is indicative of groups being mindful of a need to be strategic and deploy tactics as they try to foster organisational change.

2.2.6 Managing potential tensions in voice mechanisms

Inko-Tariah (2015: 49) describes staff networks as acting as critical friends to employers 'acting in an advisory capacity, supplementing and supporting traditional staff representation and consultation channels'.

While staff networks may have a role in revitalising voice mechanisms at work, there are also concerns that management sponsored employee networks may pose a threat to collective voice and representation if they become replacements of (rather than complementing) existing democratic union institutions (Healy and Oikelome, 2007). Others argue for greater engagement and openness between trade union strategies and minority ethnic and migrant worker's needs and politics at work (Lucio and Perrett, 2009). Hastings and Mansell (2015) note that the LGBT staff networks which have emerged in the Higher Education sector are frequently created with the support of university human resources or the equality and diversity function. They are described as engaging with the historic absence of formal representation for this identity group (Hastings and Mansell, 2015: 124).

The evidence suggests that coalition politics are important in fostering progressive change. In developing an in-depth case study of a UK-based global private sector organisation, Colgan (2016) draws on Yuval-Davis's (1998) notion of 'transversal' coalition politics:

"whereby people in different constituencies although rooted in their own identity, beliefs and membership may be prepared/required to shift to a position of exchange on matters of common concern within the work context". (Colgan, 2016)

Colgan provides examples of cross equality strand company network groups working together with some success to tackle discrimination, offer pastoral care to employees and secure adequate resources for network groups.

Going further, Scully (2009) provides an optimistic picture of four different identity-based employee network groups who were able to negotiate effective alliances across their own differences by reframing areas of shared interests, using and adapting social movement tactics, and reaching for outcomes with broader societal significance for equality.

2.2.7 Succession planning

Drawing on her experience of BAME Staff networks in the civil service, Inko-Tariah (2015) discusses the importance of building a core team to help develop the network. However, succession planning is also emphasised as important to the sustainability of a staff network (Inko-Tariah, 2015), implying a need to address a range of issues, for example high turnover of the network committee, a lack of capacity building and 'founder's syndrome' involving network leaders who are adverse to suggestions for change.

2.3 The persistence of ethnic inequalities and increased interest in staff race networks

Numerous reviews of ethnic inequalities have been undertaken highlighting the persistence of discrimination and disadvantage. For example, the McGregor Review of Race in the Workplace (2017: 2) has argued that 'There is no reason why every organisation in the

UK should not have a workforce that proportionately reflects the diversity of the communities in which they operate, at every level'.

However, ethnic minorities continue to feel that discrimination and exclusion from social networks act as barriers to career progression. The recommendations from the review indicate that organisations need to do much more to gather and monitor data on the representation of ethnic minorities in the workplace; embed accountability for equality in assessments of organisational performance, raise awareness of diversity issues, critically examine and change processes, including around recruitment and progression, to encourage greater diversity. Substantial pay gaps between ethnic groups persist (EHRC, 2018) and race and class intersect in the experience of material disadvantage (Snoussi and Mompelat, 2019).

While the recent report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (2021) has contested institutional racisms, structural discrimination and institutionalised racism have been brought to the fore by the Black Lives Matter political and social movement. In parallel with the growth of this movement, workplace ethnic minority networks and groups seem to have experienced a resurgence. They often take the form of internal workplace race and ethnic minority forums. Like other staff network structures, ethnic minority networks are often related to a profession or a company and organisation.

2.4 The potential of ethnic minority networks

Yuval-Davis (2011) discusses how there are two visions for a non- or -anti-racist society:

"One vision is universalistic – all people need to be treated the same, especially in the public sphere. The other vision is based on the politics of recognition and claims public acceptance of multicultural and affirmative action practices as a pre-condition for reaching a non-racialised society". (Yuval-Davis, 2011: 175)

The role of ethnic minority groups and networks in fostering change remains surprisingly under-researched. However, they may have the potential to help foster workplace equity. In different ways and to varying degrees, they can engage with the politics of recognition. Green (2018) drew on social learning theory to explore ERGs as learning communities through a qualitative case study of a multinational for-profit organisation headquartered in the USA. This research examined how these groups deploy formal and informal learning opportunities with a view to engaging members and non-members. The learning opportunities were 'designed to increase knowledge and skills, support membership, and to develop a more inclusive environment' (Green, 2018: 635).

An important insight from this research is how informal learning through ERGs helped enhance visibility and voice to the underrepresented groups, helped them to influence senior level staff, facilitated mentoring and the education of the broader employee base on issues of diversity and inclusion. Thus, networks potentially provide a range of social, informational, developmental and educational support for minority and/or marginalised groups as well as majority groups.

There is evidence to suggest that ethnic minority workers can feel excluded from organisational networks (Healy et al, 2011). In McGuire's study of social networks in a financial services organisation in the US, she found race and gender differences in the receipt of social support. (McGuire, 2012). Black colleagues were less likely to receive social support than White colleagues and there was a support gap for women also. The more Black people and women in a social network the more social support seemed to be provided.

Arguably ethnic minority staff networks can help to counter a sense of exclusion, reshaping social networks (Cenkci et al, 2019; Friedman et al, 2011). Cenkci and colleagues (2019) found that affiliation in an ERG increased feelings of engagement with other employees and officials in the workplace and provided a sense of being valued and respected and a sense of belonging.

Careers development may benefit from network engagement and activism. In Bhopal's exploration of the experiences of ethnic minority academics she discusses how networks and contacts have an important role to play in career development. Her findings provide insights into the informal support provided by Black senior colleagues to junior ones.

While Bhopal does not engage with the potential organisation and/or formalisation of some of these relationships in staff networks, as she and others argue (Bhavnani et al, 2005) mentoring can build powerful social networks. A survey of staff networks in the US found that they supported career optimism amongst Black managers, and a key lever for this was the mentoring provided by network

members (Friedman, 2011).

Bhavnani and colleagues (2005) suggest that one of the most successful interventions in helping to tackle racism at work in the UK has been the organisation of 'Black' staff groups. These authors discuss how in several sectors such groups have self-organised in order to push for internal change. They have also provided 'a support system for those who feel marginalised and disregarded by the organisation' (Bhavnani et al 2005: 91). They cite the examples of the Black Teachers' Network, whose activities include an annual conference that is well attended, and the Black Police Officers' Association which supports police officers in their complaints about discrimination and more broadly challenges racism in policing.

Recent research engaging with ethnicity and low wage traps across a range of employers found that such forums had the potential to provide a collective voice on organisational policies and practices that might foster racial inequalities, challenging racialised barriers at work (Hudson et.al, 2013). Well-organised and resourced forums were able to raise issues that were difficult to discuss at an individual level. They provided a mechanism for peer support and a bridge through which management could engage with employees. In so doing such forums were argued to have the potential to reduce workplace isolation and marginalisation (Hudson et.al 2013, Bhavnani et.al, 2005).

Drawing on these themes, the definition of staff race networks used in this report is that they involve a group of individuals known to be discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic identity who come together to share lived experiences, call-out racism and work towards progressive change.

2.5 Challenges experienced by ethnic minority networks

Evidence suggests that while staff ethnic minority networks have the potential to reduce workplace isolation and marginalisation (Hudson et.al 2013, Bhavnani et.al, 2005), they may be poorly resourced. As implied above, this seems to be a generic issue across identity-based staff networks. For example, Colman (2010) links the terminal decline of women-only networks in secondary and higher education to reduced support for these networks from universities and local authorities than was the case in the past.

There may also be other constraints on ethnic minority staff engagement staff in such forums. For example, those in low paid jobs may be unaware of them, or not see their relevance (Hudson et.al, 2013).

It has also been suggested that ethnic minorities may be concerned that participation in these forums may highlight their difference (Kirton and Greene, 2016). Part of the concern here may be anxieties around the potential for a co-worker backlash and anger from peers and senior colleagues, arising from their network involvement (Friedman, 2011).

It is also possible that ethnic minority networks may reduce opportunities for interactions with influential White staff (Bhavnani et al, 2005; Friedman, 2011). Interestingly recent PhD research undertaken by Gutierrez (2021) on minorities' perceptions of majority members' participation in minority spaces found that the presence (i.e. numerical amount of people) and involvement (i.e. passive to active behaviours) could negatively affect minorities' intent to join an identity-relevant affinity group. The high presence and passive involvement of allies could lead the minorities to think that ERGs were less inclusive and less of a safe space. Network strategies and tactics are likely to be important in managing such potential tensions in relationships while building key alliances.

3. Staff race networks: formation and organisation

This chapter draws on data from the case study organisations to explore the context in which race networks arise and their priorities. From there the chapter takes a closer look at network governance and organisation, including the role network chairs, executive committees, working groups, the interface between networks and human resources management. It reflects on the value of formal network structures. The chapter then moves on to consider the reasons that people join staff race networks and member perceptions of the importance of network names and how this could be linked to a sense of inclusion.

3.1 The formation of race networks

The murder of George Floyd and Black Lives Matter movement was the catalyst for the formation or re-launching of staff race networks in most of the case study organisations that participated in this research.

To take some examples, in the civil service early conversations about race and the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1999 created traction for discussions about the experiences of ethnic minority staff and heralded a subsequent growth in staff race networks. Over twenty years later national conversations were rekindled by the Black Lives Matter movement and ongoing concerns about institutional racism. For example, one network member explained how in this context they had reached out to a senior manager to encourage a conversation about the experiences of Black staff, with an emphasis on being constructive:

"... after a series of protests that happened in central London, I sent an email to my director about [the need to] check in with your black colleagues, we're all feeling a bit [concerned]. Here are some things that you can read and here are some things that you can do and that snowballed a bit of a conversation". (Network member, Government Department)

In the Government Department case studies network members perceived that senior leaders were prioritising race equity in response to negative scores on the Civil Service People Survey which explores civil servants' attitudes to, and experience of working in government departments across the whole of civil service. For example, the National Race Network for Government Department 2 was formally launched in 2019. An earlier race network had been disbanded in 2009 when the organisation moved to having one equality network covering the range of protected characteristics. However, the gap that this seemed to leave for a focus on race equity generated unease. As one interviewee explained:

"So instead of 15 people being on each of these seven groups, it was all condensed to one overarching group covering all the protective characteristics that we were allowed to cover then, and made up of about 23 people. So you can do the maths. There's obviously going to be less coverage. And everything basically shifted from being face-to-face meetings to quarterly meetings virtual online. Everything became online and it watered down the agenda of absolutely everything". (Network member, ethnic minority man, Government Department 2)

As a network co-chair further explained: "there was no safe space for our staff to be able to come together and work on race equality". In 2018 ethnic minority staff informally came together to discuss the need to relaunch a race network in their Department, preparing a paper for the senior leadership team. Some temporary appointments were made to get the network up and running. Mosque attacks in New Zealand in March 2019 and the murder of George Floyd the following year helped to raise racism consciousness and the burgeoning network drew out links to the need to take action to eliminate racism both within and beyond the workplace. Senior leaders were taking note and seeking to engage with race inequities, for example a network co-chair explained how a senior leader wanted to write a blog and sought advice:

"And then we had obviously the murder of George Floyd and that video which went viral. It visualised life experiences of black people in the United States and around the world. And then [a senior manager] had, obviously like everybody else seen the video and he was going to blog about it. And he wanted to name check the National Race Network and he wasn't sure about what language we wanted to be used, if it will upset anybody. And so he rung me and we had a [long] chat and we talked about his blog language". (network co-chair, Government Department 2)

The senior manager wrote the blog, raising the profile of the network. Interest subsequently grew in the work that the network wanted to do and network membership also grew. In the space of three months the network ran 40 events as well as a national race conference which the senior manager attended with his executive team.

In local government too discussion about race seemed to have lost its way. CouncilCo previously had a Black Asian and Minority Ethnic network that had run for six years. The network was largely clustered in one department and, when several members of the steering group left, the network had atrophied. However, a senior manager described how complicit in its demise had been lack of recognition of racism and its contribution to the absence of ethnic minority staff from senior management; and a perception on the part of senior managers that addressing this was not their responsibility. He explained that if anyone tried to raise the issue with senior

managers:

"They shrugged, they didn't engage, they didn't see this as an issue that was their responsibility to resolve. And so that network disappeared on the basis that the organisation just wasn't listening". (Senior manager, CouncilCo)

The arrival of a new CouncilCo Chief Executive appeared to have been a turning point. He was concerned about the lack of Black representation in senior leadership, began a discussion with Black colleagues, clearly indicating that he wanted to do more to address race inequities. Black members of staff held a meeting to discuss the way forward and a new network steering group arose from those discussions. As a senior manager explained, with support from the top of the organisation, the mobilisation of the staff race network, like other networks in CouncilCo, was very much staff-led:

"And one of the things that I'm most proud of, the staff networks that we have now all grew up organically themselves. It was people in the organisation saying, right, we need to establish this network. And one of the main reasons why that has happened is because they saw an organisation that was, we were different. We wanted to listen to them, we wanted to change, and we needed the help, the challenge, the being held to account, that the network could give us in order to do that. So that's how our networks came about. They came about because the organisation, the staff, created them rather than it being imposed on the organisation. It's not led by the senior leadership. It's led by the staff, the people who created them in the first place". (Senior manager, CouncilCo)

In FinanceCo the Race and Ethnicity network was reformed in July 2019. Initially this organisation had 26 networks that were seen as inconsistent in their approach, with varying degrees of resources and connection to senior leaders. As a human resources manager explained:

"So the race network then became the Black network, the Muslim network. So there was a real compilation of religion and it was ethnic identity ... Black network, Muslim network, Sikh network, South Asian network, Far East network ... Anzac, Australia, New Zealand wanted a network, Turkic [speaking] communities". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

These FinanceCo staff networks were rationalised over time, each having a chair, Treasurer and Secretary. In 2019 eight of these network communities spanning from America to Africa were involved in an organisational restructure process which rationalised these groupings into the Race and Ethnicity Network (REN) which acted as the umbrella organisation. The different communities that came together in REN were seen as having a lot of common ground. With the murder of George Floyd and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, members of REN were galvanised into action. Black network members came to the fore and were particularly active, as both the REN co-chairs and HR manager explained:

"[The murder of George Floyd was] a bit of a game-changer for us in terms of really putting us into action and really walking the walk, essentially, of us being that voice for people. Because I think you may have so many employee resource groups at different firms, but rarely have I seen the influence that the network has had on strategy and policy within a firm, so we're people doing that" (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

"Over the last two years, the Black network has taken the lead since George Floyd, the race protests. So they have been a particularly loud voice. But they have worked with the other networks and generally, we talk about Black networks, but we talk about similar issues with other ethnic minority disadvantage". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

In NHS Trust 1, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) had been aware that ethnic minority groups were over represented amongst disciplinary cases, an issue common across the NHS (Archibong et. al., 2019). Staff were asked to volunteer to be trained. The RCN was aware that there were ethnic inequities in disciplinary cases and extended an invitation for ethnic minority staff to volunteer to do a two-week training course supporting engagement with cases. One respondent explained that this role was to provide an additional layer of scrutiny, and he was keen to get involved:

"And these were a group of people who were going to work for the trust, especially when there was a disciplinary issue that was tabled. They were not going to work as union reps, but they were to work as a conscience, really, for the trust just to ask questions. Was this individual really meant to be put forward for disciplinary? Is there some cultural misunderstanding here? If somebody from another community, say from the white community, was to do a similar misdemeanour, will they end up at that stage of the disciplinary? That

was attractive to me because I'd already felt that there were some disparities. I put myself forward". (Network member, NHS Trust 1)

However, management suggested a more proactive approach, rather than interventions taking place when a disciplinary procedure was already in place. Those who had done the training were encouraged to raise awareness of microaggressions and other actions that were leading to the disproportionate representation of ethnic minorities in disciplinary cases. In 2017, the ethnic minority staff who got involved in this activity came together to form a BAME staff network, a step that was supported by the Trust's management. As one network member explained there was scepticism as it was not the first time that a BAME staff network had been formed, but he did see potential:

"... people said, we've been through different versions of this network before. Why do we feel that this time around, it's going to change? Is it going to be one of those mourning groups where we come and we mourn and we mourn and nothing gets changed? After the first meeting, I remember some of our people didn't come back, because the person who was leading out couldn't guarantee people that this group is going to make that much of a difference. But personally, I stayed because I said to myself, if the trust is commissioning something like this, whether the change is going to be eventual or is going to come in the long run, for me that is a forum that I wanted to utilise and get my voice heard". (Network member, NHS Trust 1)

In the second NHS Trust, a senior manager discussed how a combination of the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of the pandemic on ethnic minority staff at the Trust have been a catalyst for building a Staff Race Network in 2019. As he explained:

"It felt like a catalyst, it felt like a moment in time, that got everybody's attention, that got everybody thinking. But, at the same time, we were very conscious about the differential impact of COVID-19 on minority ethnic colleagues, and the community. We've lost about seven colleagues to COVID during the pandemic ... the first three were all from minority ethnic backgrounds. There was a feeling within the organisation where this just felt like a moment. So it was an opportunity for us to redouble our efforts around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and the staff networks seemed to be a critical part of that". (Senior Manager, NHS Trust 2)

The Senior Manager supported each of the Trust's staff networks being assigned an executive director to act as the network sponsor, taking on the sponsorship of the BAME network himself.

Union Network 1 was the oldest amongst the case studies. It arose from frontline ethnic minority workers' experiences of racism. This often took the form of racist 'banter'. When a Black fire fighter told colleagues that he was on the verge of leaving due to a culture of offensive racist banter, his colleagues decided that it was important for ethnic minority workers to meet to discuss their experiences in what felt like a toxic organisational culture. As one respondent explained:

"So his cousin rang me, and I said, well I didn't know this was going on with him but I think what we need to do is we need to talk, we need to get a few people together and have a discussion. Because I know somebody else who's been through a lot of this so-called banter, I'd been through it for years, this guy is now going through it. We need to get together and have a discussion". (Ex network chair, union network 1)

So in the early 1990s, fifteen ethnic minority firefighters got together and decided that they needed to form a group that would facilitate collective representation. As the respondent explained:

"We had a long discussion, and we decided at the end of that discussion that we needed to organise properly. And we needed to form a group amongst ourselves that represented us and represented our particular issues as active black firefighters". (Ex network chair, union network 1)

Nominated to provide some leadership he then set about researching Black networks, including Black teachers and Black lawyers. He found that these workers were experiencing similar issues, expressing a sense of solidarity thus:

"The meetings, it was like paradise, it was like, oh my God I'm not the only one". (Ex network chair, union network 1)

In 1995, the Fire Brigades Union heard that its Black members were meeting outside of the unions structure and offered its help which included integrating the Black members into the union structure. There was some concern that the Black members would lose control.

Organising a national meeting of Black firefighters, the union was shocked to see how alienated Black members were:

"So the union then held this meeting, and the anger that was expressed by the black firefighters at that meeting towards the Fire Brigades Union was palpable. They were in shock, these white representatives of the Fire Brigades Union, they were in absolute shock". (Ex network chair, union network 1)

At a second national meeting the following year five Black members were integrated into the senior leadership of the FBU. The year 1999 saw the formation of the Black and Ethnic Minority Members section of the FBU. However, in the ensuing years there appears to have been a movement away from a Black members section towards Equality Support Groups.

3.2 Network priorities

The race networks had an interconnected social and 'business' side. While working to support their members, providing a safe space for them to meet and share experiences, they wanted to see progress on race equity, encouraging changes in organisational cultures and practices. Examples of network aims are presented below.

Staff Network Group 1 pillars:

- building a culture of belonging
- being inspired by difference
- being at the centre of [our city] and our communities
- delivering excellence through inclusion

FAME Network pillars: Government Department 1:

- achieving departmental race and faith literacy
- evolution, which involved addressing balances in recruitment, progression, performance management, and reward
- culture change, so build it into the business

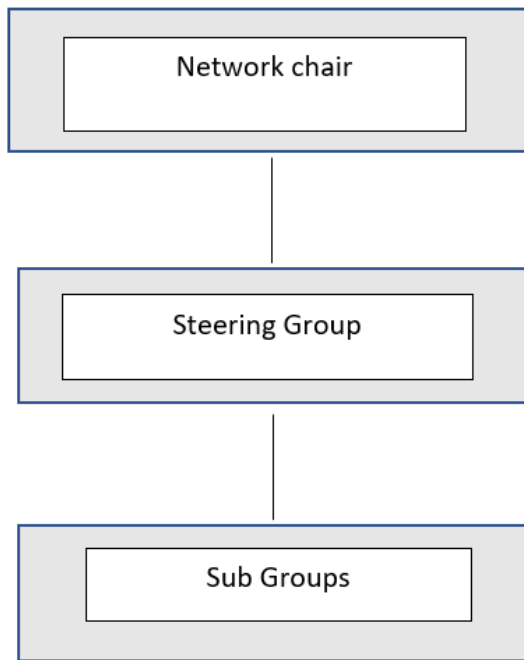
3.3 Network governance and organisation

The impetus for greater structure and formalisation of staff race networks came from both the network members and management. Network organisation was tailored to their needs but had common features, as conveyed by the governance structures outlined in figures 3a, 3b and 3c. Those common features include network chairs, executive committees, working groups and executive sponsors, the role of which will be explored in more detail below.

BAME Network Governance, CouncilCo

For the BAME network at CouncilCo, the network governance structure was a network chair sitting above a steering group who sat above sub-groups of the network.

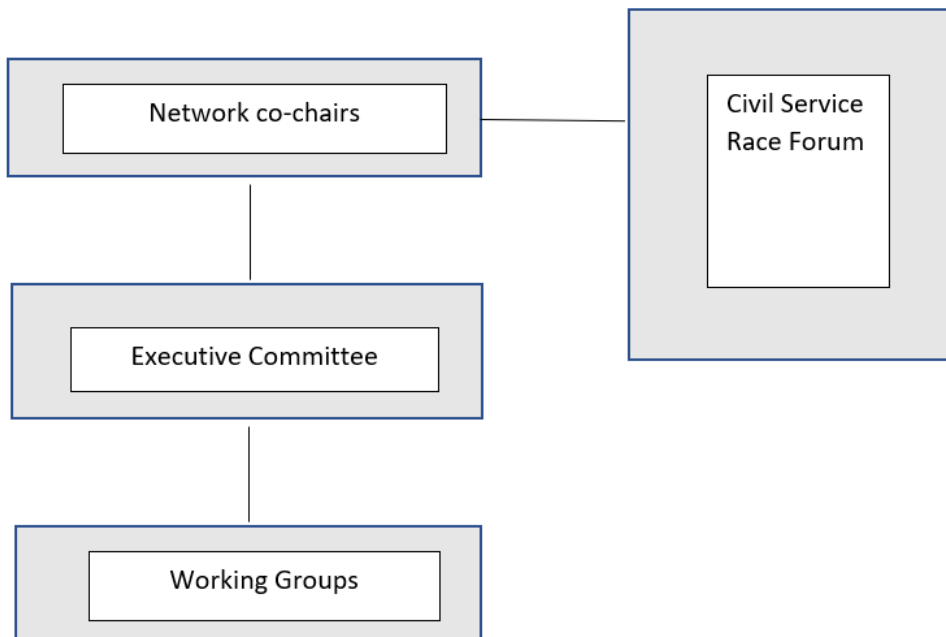
Figure 3a: BAME Network Governance, CouncilCo



Faith and Minority Ethnic Network, Government Department 1

For the Faith and minority ethnic network at Government Department 1, the network governance structure was network co-chairs sitting above an executive committee who sat above working groups of the network. The network co-chairs worked alongside the civil service race forum.

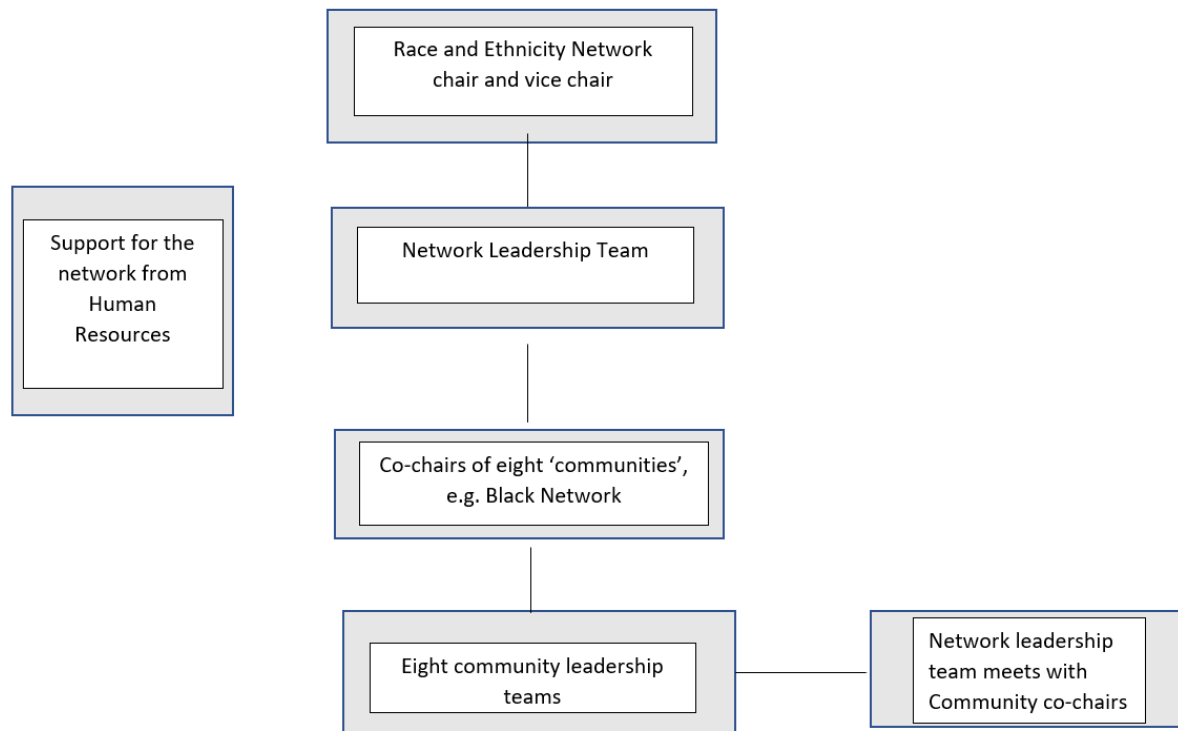
Figure 3b: Faith and Minority Ethnic Network, Government Department 1



Race and Ethnicity Network Governance, FinanceCo

For the Race and ethnicity network at FinanceCo, the network governance structure was a network chair and vice chair sitting above the network leadership team who sat above co-chairs of eight 'communities' such as the black network. These sat above the eight community leadership teams and these teams worked with community co-chairs. Human resources provided support for the whole structure.

Figure 3c: Race and Ethnicity Network Governance, FinanceCo



3.3.1 The role of network chairs and co-chairs

Networks have a chair who provide leadership in a number of areas. Alongside shaping the development of the network and overseeing its management, the network chairs interviewed for this research worked with senior leaders to make clear their responsibility for fostering race equity engaging with members. This encouragement of responsible management included working with executive leadership teams to build understanding of what needed to change and why.

Part of the leadership role of network chairs embodies being 'a conduit' for positivity amongst ethnic minority staff, as conveyed in the following quotation from the CouncilCo network chair:

"I suppose in some ways I take my role as being able to inspire some positivity, particularly where some of the workforce have felt that there has been no reason to be positive. So, I think it's about being positive but also about keeping it real and being a conduit, I suppose, to take their experiences and make sure that we make changes in order for negative experiences to happen less frequently". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

Co-chairs can share this network leadership role as was the case, for example, in FinanceCo, the Government Departments and Trust 2. A co-chair arrangement can help network leaders to manage the work pressures and facilitate mutual support, as explained by the Government Department 1 co-chairs.

"... that comfort of having someone, that if it gets too much, I can just say to them, and they understand what I'm going through and be able to provide that support and advice or that ear or that shoulder is great. But also as well, sometimes someone who can challenge

you, and challenge you in a good way. Like, great. Yes, we've done all this, but what else can we do? Great. We've done this, but actually, we could've done this better... We've been really lucky to be able to use each other as each other's strength. I would give respect to anyone who's running their own network or their own group or leading their own teams and doing those things by themselves because there's quite a heavy burden". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

Network leaders had varying degrees of experience when they came to the role. Some had been union representatives which meant that they could draw on their experience of network activism. While there is evidence in early research on staff networks of more 'highly skilled' staff being encouraged to take on network leadership roles (Friedman and Holtom, 2002), the staff networks participating in the present research appeared less prescriptive in this regard. For example, one co-chair suggested that, in her experience, being a more junior person had not been a barrier to taking on a network leadership role while emphasising the value of network members being treated as equals:

"I'd say [network] structure is important, but hierarchy is not. When I'd actually took on the role in 2019, I was the youngest and most junior person in the room trying to apply for that position. At first, I was hesitant because I understand the power, let's say, of hierarchy, but thought, no, screw it. I'm going to give it a go and hopefully make some change.... as time's gone on, we've made sure we've kept that philosophy, really, within our teams, that it doesn't matter if you're a graduate, just joined, or if you are a senior manager. Everybody's equal in this team, and that might not be what happens outside in your day role, but when you come to [the network], you're going to be treated as equal regardless, and I think that's really helped us". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

Indeed network leaders often discussed how their network role allowed them to build leadership skills and experience that could be deployed in other roles in their organisation. Network chairs/co-chairs also spoke of their 'passion' for making a difference, and wanting to fulfil the potential to foster organisational change.

3.3.2 Network Executive Committees, Steering Groups and Boards

The networks also had Executive Committees, Steering Groups or Boards. While different names were given to these structures, they all essentially did the same thing: provided an additional layer of leadership.

Steering Group members sometimes had clearly delineated responsibilities reflecting priorities. For example, CouncilCo had a 32 member Steering Group drawn from different directorates and members were also representative of a range of ethnicities and nationalities. Initially people from an African or a Caribbean background were overrepresented on the group, and calls were made for people from other backgrounds to join. Network members discussed and agreed priority work areas, such as two members having responsibility for external partnerships and another member having responsibility for recruitment.

Network chairs, in CouncilCo and other case study organisations, emphasised the need for steering group's to be action orientated:

"I've really encouraged all of the steering group to participate and be part of an action working group, so it's not just about warming a seat". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

What helped these organisational structures to work well appeared to be the mutual support provided by their members. For example, the Race and Ethnicity Network at FinanceCo had a leadership team that met monthly and was in effect an umbrella for eight different communities, each of which had a leadership team. The network co-chairs discussed how the skill-sets of its six-person leadership team complemented each other:

"I think the great thing about us is everyone has got a different skillset, so one of our team members looks after the budget and the finance side of things. Another member has got a lot of experience in events and digital, virtual platforms for events. I'd like to think I bring a bit of marketing expertise, so we've got a bit of a mixed bag, which is great". (Network co-chair FinanceCo)

The leadership team members debated a range of issues, bringing different perspectives to the discussion.

A member of the Steering Group in CouncilCo explained that mutual support was important in building the strength of the network:

"... there's been previous iteration of BAME Network. But this recent one which is going strong under the leadership of [the chair] and steering group. It's been going quite well because we do support each other, and I think the strength of the individual members is part of the reason why the Network is so strong". (Network member, CouncilCo)

The network chair discussed the importance of 'shared leadership', reflecting upon how the confidence of the steering group members have grown in taking on greater network leadership:

"I think in the early days [I] needed to drive it more and more. But I think as people have become more and more comfortable with standing up and saying, this is not right, people have taken on greater leadership which is brilliant. So, yes that's probably in a bit of a nutshell how I see my role really". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

Meeting on a regular basis was important for maintaining communication and dialogue amongst network leaders, providing an opportunity to give practical advice and support to colleagues in their endeavours. For example in FinanceCo the Race & Ethnicity Network leadership met weekly and then on a monthly basis met with the co-chairs of the eight communities. An HR manager discussed how when the eight communities came together formed the Race & Ethnicity Network they had a conviction that they wanted to work closely. The network co-chairs felt that the monthly meetings helped in tracking current and future activities and any resource needs linked to plans.

The monthly meetings also provided an opportunity for the REN leadership team to support the co-chairs in brainstorming activity, which was particularly important for the less established communities.

"I think the biggest thing for us is challenge because we don't want our communities to be running events for events' sake. It's very easy to put on a webcast where everybody just maybe vents about a particular issue or just get a speaker just for them to talk about their journey to date". (REN co-chair, FinanceCo)

Similarly the board of the National Race Network met monthly at a regular/set time, for half a day. Board members often met between meetings as they worked on agreed tasks.

3.3.3 Working groups building agility and strategy into network governance structures

Several networks have tried to reshape their governance structures to make them more strategic and agile.

Network working groups arose as a vehicle for supporting members on working on issues that they were concerned about in a more strategic way. Working groups arose organically evolving into autonomous network teams. For example, members of the Faith and Minority Ethnic network (FAME) worked on an event with members of a women's network. Both sets of network members felt that there was a need for structured collaboration that could engage with the concerns of ethnic minority women. One network activist in this newly formed group explained:

"some members of FAME and some members of Women Empowerment decided that they were going to do this event. And I think it was really clear that there was a demand for something more. And so four women decided to create this working group". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, FAME)

Early activities included organising an event to raise the profile of the experiences of ethnic minority women, conducting further analysis of the Civil Service People Survey by gender and ethnicity and another event to discuss how network members could engage with senior leaders in the organisation. This working group had four co-leads as well as network member volunteers who worked with the co-leads. Reflecting on their vision the group has developed a strategy document. It has been important to the group to build a lens that recognised the intersection of gender and race, for example in mentoring schemes:

"But what's the things that we can do to add a specific lens or a specific bit for women of colour so they feel included in those wider schemes. And then also what are the things that we ourselves can create to support people". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, FAME)

Similarly, FAME developed a South East Asian Working Group in 2020. Again the working group arose organically from the interests of network members and this has helped to shape network activities. The first one was described as a "hard-hitting presentation about the racism faced by East and South East Asians in the UK, because that's obviously a distinct experience to that experienced by other minorities", engaging with harmful tropes and negative stereotypes.

Over 100 colleagues attended providing positive feedback on how the event had raised their awareness. This was followed up with a safe space discussion, specifically for East and South East Asian women, responding to their interest in engaging with the intersection between misogyny and racism. The focus for discussion was the hyper-sexualisation of East Asian women, its portrayal in film and how this spills over into everyday life. There has been interest in making the working group cross-government but members feel that it is important to continue to build the group before taking this step.

The working groups meet approximately once a fortnight, often keeping meetings to 30 minutes and rotating the chairing responsibilities in order to help keep the time commitment manageable. Volunteer involvement in the working groups was encouraged, and as the following quotation from a co-chair explains it was important that those volunteers felt empowered to take forward their ideas:

"It shouldn't be that volunteers feel like they have to deliver our vision as committee members, or co-chairs, or whatever. It should more be that, as committee members and as co-chairs, we're delivering their vision. So we're supporting and working for them, if that makes sense. So we make sure we're not closing the door for people to come to us. Really encouraging that and empowering people, supporting them, because they may not have the experience in delivering events, or something. For example, if they've got an idea for events, supporting them in how they could do that, and putting them in touch with the right places but really supporting them in delivering their visions". (Network co-chair, FAME, Government Department 1)

NHS Trust 2 had a growing presence of Filipino nurses in the workforce, with new cohorts arriving almost daily. A sub-group of the network had been set up to support them.

3.3.4 The role of network sponsors and champions

As noted in the previous chapter there is evidence that network champions help to increase network visibility, provide legitimacy, and improve access to resources important to network success (Hastings and Mansell, 2015; Inko-Tariah, 2015; Tatli and Alasia, 2011).

The case studies in the present research reinforced these themes; and had sponsors who were senior managers. They aimed to champion the networks, enabling a voice for the network at a senior level. For example, FinanceCo had a network sponsor who was a partner in the firm. As one of the co-chairs explained:

"...every network in the firm and community tries to have a partner sponsor because it helps to elevate our voice as well and they've often got a seat at the leadership table. So that's the network at the top". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

As the network sponsor in Trust 2 explained, a sponsor can act as a catalyst for organisational change to ensure that rather than just talking about the need for action on race inequities, action actually takes place. Without tangible action disillusion can set in, as he explained:

"I have been a little bit of a catalyst, I've been a little bit challenging really, just to try and stimulate action. ... A couple of meetings back, we had a conversation about, well, is this all just long words, and just talking the talk, are we going to do something? There's a natural kind of development process, that I'm sure networks go through, and it's a bit like forming, norming and storming. Polite conversation's probably one of the steps on that journey. But there's then a disillusionment, when we realise that, what are we actually doing?" (BAME Network sponsor, Trust 2)

3.3.5 The interface between Networks and Human Resources

The relationship between the Human Resource function and the networks appears to be one of supported autonomy, to varying degrees agreeing and co-developing governance structures.

At one end of that spectrum was FinanceCo where HR agreed and co-developed the governance structure and undertook periodic reviews, every couple of years, of how things were working. This included a process of re-engaging with network co-chairs, for example considering committee composition, reviewing budget requirements and touching on emerging issues such as increased data protection considerations where LinkedIn and Facebook pages have been set up. There is also an element of reminding network leaders of the need to protect the organisational reputation. As an HR respondent noted:

"Don't forget you need to protect our reputation, don't forget it's the firm's money you're spending, don't forget you are beholden to your communities, not to your own personal ambitions. So nothing changes that much but by going through a process of review, it re-contracts with them and also we always learn something that make us need to tweak them". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

Human Resource teams sometimes facilitated the training of network leaders, contracting this out to external specialists.

3.3.6 The value of formal network structures

Research participants conveyed the importance of having a formal network structure. For example, in FinanceCo the network chairs discussed how in a big corporate organisation that operates in a structured way the network's views and ideas will be taken more seriously:

"When you have a bigger organisation like us, a big corporate organisation that, by nature, it operates in a very structured way. Often, in order for that big business to see the value in what you're doing and for it to make more, I'd say, business sense for them, there almost has to be a structure in that network as well because then when we are taking certain things forward, when we are trying to push for certain things to leadership, they will want to see a structure. So if we've got an idea, we have to get our ducks in a row before we even go to them, so I think the structure is so important within the network". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

Structure was also seen as important in holding network chairs to account for the budget that they spent and the events that they committed to organise.

3.4 Reasons for joining race networks

Network leaders discussed the need to have a critical mass of members to support pressure for change.

Network members became aware of the potential to join a workplace race network though network awareness raising that took place at staff conferences and meetings and through organisational newsletters. Alongside this network chairs also approached colleagues informally to encourage involvement, as did some line managers who were themselves involved in the network.

This multi-pronged outreach approach to potential network members could help to support network inclusion, avoiding exclusion of members of staff based on assumptions about their identity. Relatedly, well publicised network events were also a catalyst for attracting new members, as illustrated by the following quotation from a network member in Government Department 1 who attended a network event, was inspired and wanted to be part of keeping those kinds of activities going:

"And I felt like it's very hard to have something that's really good and not have that anymore. Because for me, having those [network] events was just so great. And that's definitely the biggest factor of what got me in and I really wanted to be a part of it. They were so many great speakers, I felt so inspired, I felt so motivated. I think after my first month of attending the events, I put my name down to be a [network] committee member because that was when they had the yearly elections". (Network member, ethnic minority women, Government Department 1)

While pathways to network membership had been very clear for this network member, this had not always been the case; as conveyed by a network member for whom it had taken several years to join the race network. As he explained:

"I think, for me, probably one of those reasons was either I didn't get invited or I didn't know the secret password or sometimes I just didn't understand what they were trying to achieve. It's very difficult to align yourself with something or someone if you don't actually know why you are doing it. I think, for me, it was really hard at that time to actually understand, besides the colour of my skin, what

exactly was the benefit of being in this network? What were we trying to achieve, and also as well, what kind of impact were we looking at having?" (Network member, Government Department 1)

Eventually a trigger for him was going to network events and hearing a network leader clearly articulating ethnic inequalities in the organisation, while also articulating solutions.

A recurring reason for joining a network was the perception of ethnic inequalities and the desire to make a difference. There were concerns about racist harassment and bullying, cultural insensitivity and micro-aggressions in organisational cultures. The following quotations illustrate concerns about often subtle forms of discrimination that people wanted to see addressed:

"So you have to reel it in and be more professional, and you can't really speak in a certain type of way because you have to act white, speak white. Why can't we be ourselves? Why can't I have dreadlocks and be at the top of an organisation? Why do I need to be clean shaven and look a certain type of way? So there's different barriers that we need to break." (Network member, ethnic minority man, CouncilCo)

"In my team there was never any overt racism or misunderstanding that I had to deal with. It was more what we talk about in micro-aggressions. There were instances like there was a Christmas quiz and it was all about Christmas across the world. One of the questions was, what do people in India call Father Christmas? The entire room looked at me. I was like, one, I'm not actually from India, so how would I know what they call it on the ground? And, two, am I the only Indian person in this room? Is that why you're all looking at me? So it was those kinds of slight uncomfortable moments, instances where people mixed me up with the only other person who looked vaguely Indian. ... So getting our names mixed up and not even actually registering that that's happened". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Government Department 1)

Network members had joined to address structural racism in their organisations, including discrimination in recruitment, performance appraisal and progression and over-representation of ethnic minorities in discipline and grievance procedures. Some described their career struggles and how they wanted to make things better for other ethnic minority workers. Glass ceilings for ethnic minority workers were a recurring theme across all the case study organisations. The following quotations are illustrative:

"And I became passionate about the race issue and the diversity and inclusion based really on my experience as a trainee nurse and in my job as a mental health nurse at the hospital. There were some disparities in terms of representation, especially as you go up the ladder, especially as a qualified nurse. You find that there is a lot of staff from the BAME community who are Band 5s and lots of them who are Band 3s, the Health Care Assistants". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Trust 1)

"I particularly find it very annoying somehow that the way that the economy has gone, we are going to get more maybe over-qualified people in the department. Because it still offers some longevity towards employment. But then you come in and you're sucked into the current way of things in the department, where you're not pushed on. You're actually being dumbed down. You're told, this is the hoop you jump through, but really nothing really changes for some people. You're still having to befriend someone who can speak up for you. What is really going on here? I've known staff members who've got PhDs and they're Administrative Officers. What the hell is going on there? Why is the team leader, or line manager, whatever they want to refer to themselves as, not saying, well, obviously this person has got some kind of talent, why aren't we using it?" (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Government Department 2)

"And, the struggles to get where I am today, I wouldn't want someone else to go through those same processes. I would hope, if my daughter joins, it would be a very different story to how I've navigated myself". (Network member, ethnic minority man, CouncilCo)

Others had been disturbed by the talented colleagues who had left their organisation:

"I've lost a lot of friends leaving the firm who are ethnic minority individuals who were extremely talented but was not able to fulfil their potential because of the barriers and blocks that were there from a cultural perspective. And again, that same message of not feeling like they belonged when it came to all sorts of stages of the employee life cycle, from promotion, progression, to performance reviews". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

People were attracted to race networks by the potential opportunity to discuss and make more visible their lived experience of racial discrimination and disadvantage. The following quotations are illustrative.

"...I think maybe the thing about the BAME network for me is that space where you can talk about things that, issues or things that generally need to be spoken about. And I think we will get a better [organisation], because when we start to hear from everybody then you really start to understand, actually, that there are some things that I need to look into". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, CouncilCo)

"It was just I thought it gave us a great place to be able to speak about issues around [my employer], and I think that is an area whereby you can say as you feel. And I think it is necessary that we do speak about issues within the workplace, and it affects all different types of people. So for me, that was the reason why I got involved..." (Network member, ethnic minority woman, CouncilCo)

Research participants who had joined a race network often felt that they had a contribution to make to changing their organisations and improving the lived experience of ethnic minority staff. They felt willing and able to prioritise making that contribution:

"I was like, I've got a bit of energy, I've got a bit of time. Why don't I see what I can help out with? I think I've always tried to be positive, even when sometimes things don't go to plan or it's a bit frustrating when you talk to people and they don't really understand what you're saying. So I tried to come in with a bit more of a positive outlook of things will change eventually if we put in the work." (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Government Department 1)

Another notable feature of some network member accounts of their motivations for network membership was their awareness of, and concerns about racial discrimination and disadvantage beyond the workplace. Racist incidents around the globe acted as a trigger for network involvement. The following quotation is from a civil service network member who reflected on global events and then prioritised joining the network:

"I'd see the [information about network activities] come in and then I'd be like, I'm too busy at the time to actually engage. And the real turning point for me was actually around the time when... There was a quite traumatic event for East and South East Asian people across the world earlier this year, where there were the shootings in Atlanta and they targeted mainly, I think six out of eight people that died were East Asian women. And it was largely not recorded as a hate crime or as a racially motivated crime, but it clearly was. There was clearly that element there. But it felt like it was all being swept under the rug and denied. It was quite a triggering moment." (Network member, ethnic minority man, Government Department 1)

Just as the murder of George Floyd ignited the launching or re-launching of race networks, it also fuelled a growth in network membership.

Network members spoke passionately about wanting to honour their parents' experiences and contributions and trying to ensure that their children did not encounter racism at work. They emphasised the importance of ethnic minorities getting involved in race networks feeling that their activism was important in bringing about change. The following quotations from network members in CouncilCo and FinanceCo illustrates many of these themes:

"And then also remembering my parents, Windrush. My aunt she was a union rep in Nottingham in her time. Just think about the contributions that they made and them always telling us don't come home telling us that you have allowed this to happen to you. That we just heard as a child. So I suppose all that fed into now. And in just the year 2020, working from home and all that happened in the media across the pond made me think and challenged me to bring about that change because I couldn't rely on those that were at the table because I didn't think they'd give their best effort for me. ... I don't want anybody else to go through it. And I don't want them to get away with that. I don't want them to get away with it either." (Network member, ethnic minority man, CouncilCo)

"We might not necessarily see the massive change in our time, but for the future generations to come, let's make it a better place." (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

One network member had been active on race issues while studying at University and when she entered the world of work she wanted to continue this activism:

"I'm dark skinned so I've always throughout life always just had issues [with racism], so I've always strived to find a place where I can speak out and get my ideas heard. In university I was able to do the same while I was there for the time. ...I've always wanted to strive to be in a network where I can do this because it's so key". (Network member, CouncilCo)

Some respondents also conveyed how they wished that it was not necessary to have a race network. They felt uneasy about being 'labelled' through their involvement with the network:

"For me it's more to see better representation of black people. But then I always thought to myself, where do you draw the line as a black person in terms of what you want to get your voice out there? Because once we start talking and trying to get our point across, it seems almost like here we go again, they've come again. And so it's almost a feeling that I want to, but I don't want to, because I don't want to have this label on me". (Network member, ethnic minority man, CouncilCo)

3.5 Network names and inclusion

All the race networks participating in this research emphasised that they had an emphasis on being inclusive. Table 3a provides a brief overview of the race networks in each organisation, indicating they had a variety of names. Amongst research participants there were mixed views on the terminology, including some resentment of the label BAME, particularly amongst network members in CouncilCo:

"I think for me initially, even the term BAME very much felt like it was given to us. There is such a massive difference in terms of the amount of different ethnic minorities there are within the black sub-group, within the Asian sub-group, and all of that, and it's very much white and then everyone else. Which didn't sit well with me, I'll be honest". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, CouncilCo)

"I find the BAME thing, the narrative I don't particularly like, and I'd like to be involved in trying to change it". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, CouncilCo)

By contrast a network member in a government department found the BAME acronym less problematic, explaining the importance of not fragmenting ethnic minority communities while also needing to understand differential outcomes within them thus:

"I'm one of those that's not hung up on talking about BAME, or not BAME, or whatever. My issue about this is, let's look at the data and let's segregate the data. There's power in the collective. If we start having black-only this and Asian-only that, we will fragment even more. We're not even a critical mass as it goes. So coming together, using the collective voice to raise issues, you need the black, Asian minority ethnic because that's a big group. But when we start looking at the data, let's look at the data intelligently and segregate it". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Government Department)

In NHS Trust 2 there had been plans for a meeting to discuss the network name which had been cancelled due to pandemic related work pressures. A meeting was being planned as questions were being asked about whether 'BAME network' was the best name for all staff to feel a sense of belonging to the network. One of the network co-chairs reflected on how she would like a network name that all members of the network could 'Embrace'. As illustrated in appendix 2, some networks have chosen the name 'embrace'. While the network had started with a focus on Black and Asian minority groups, Italian and Spanish colleagues did not feel that they belonged.

A similar theme emerged in CouncilCo where both network members and non-members participated in the focus group element of the research. As conveyed in the following quotation from a CouncilCo member, there was network discussion taking place around how inclusive it was. There were mixed views on this, with the name of the network reported to be helping to shape the degree to which potential members felt welcome:

"I think as a network there's two things that happen, some people say we're too inclusive and others are saying we're not inclusive enough. And there's an issue around the name of the network that people feel that is a barrier to other people coming in. And so there's a need to explain the name ... But also we've always been open as a network as to who can join the network and welcoming people in to the network". (Network member, woman, CouncilCo)

Reinforcing this theme, a White ethnic minority woman participating in one of the focus groups described how she felt the need to reflect on whether the race network was for her in terms of where she belonged. Her perception of there being a dilemma around this

seemed more about her White identity than the network name. She explained how she was trying to negotiate her identity thus:

"I don't feel like I'm White enough, because I'm Latin. So I'm not someone who goes in that group. But then when I join or have conversation with other minorities, so I feel I am a minority, somehow, I am European. At home I thought I was half white, but I discover I'm not white since I moved to the UK, as I have a different tick box. ... So it's a bit of almost like an identity crisis here that came, who I am. And I was, like, should I join? Because then again it gives me this sense, because when I came here I felt like what are all these people going to think about me? Because they're all going to see me as White. But if I join a White group, they are going to see me as non-White". (Non network member, woman, CouncilCo)

This research participant did not experience the same dilemma when she joined the organisation's women's network:

"At least I feel better when I join women groups, because then I feel like, okay, I can speak for myself, I'm a woman, I've been discriminated because I'm a woman. But in terms of race and ethnicity, yes, at this stage I still don't know where I fit in the country or in the culture of the country". (Non BAME network member, woman, CouncilCo)

The following quotation conveys a concern that discussions about the network name should not detract from the pursuit of network objectives, albeit that fostering a sense of belonging was perceived as important, and the role of language in this recognised:

"Language is so important though, and with all of the negative connotations and how BAME has been used, I completely get it, but I didn't want people to be distracted by that and we forget the objectives". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

Table 3a: Network names in the case study organisations

Case	Network name
Union Network 1/ Staff Network 1	Black and Ethnic Minority Members (embedded in union)/ Employee Support Group
CouncilCo	BAME Network
Union Network 2	Black Members section (of a union)
Government Department 1	Faith and Minority Ethnic Network
FinanceCo	Race & Ethnicity Network
Government Department 2	National Race Network
Trust 1	The BAME Network
Trust 2	The BAME Network

4. Making an impact: network strategies and tactics

Network leaders and members participating in this research outlined a variety of strategies and tactics for pursuing their aims. These included:

- raising network visibility and supporting network member recruitment
- initiatives to support network member inclusion and development
- sharing lived experiences on a number of levels
- engaging senior managers

- working with other allies
- collaboration with other identity networks
- union engagement
- being outward looking and engaging with wider society
- making innovations in network structures to build cross-organisational networks
- using technology
- fostering network sustainability

This chapter will look at each of these in turn.

4.1 Raising network visibility and supporting network member recruitment

As implied earlier in the report, race networks were working to foster an inclusive culture. This included organising events that engaged with the concerns of both network members and potential members, as was illustrated by a planned event on microaggressions organised by the race network in FinanceCo. It was targeted at underrepresented groups with a view to exploring questions such as the perpetrators of microaggressions and whether these were intentional or unintentional. This kind of event was seen as a way to engage potential network members.

Similarly, FAME's South East Asian Working Group used its events not only to raise awareness of members' lived experience, but also to promote the network to potential members, making it as visible as possible.

"If we were really going to have a great impact, we needed to put ourselves out there, front and centre, making sure that we had clear messaging, which is what I mentioned before, but also as well having things in place that could hopefully help attract members back into the Civil Service Race Forum". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

4.2 Supporting network member inclusion and development

As implied earlier there was an emphasis on building opportunities for network members to grow.

Network chairs were keen to avoid 'a top-down approach' and have more of a 'meet-in-the-middle approach' expanding the leadership input across a wider range of network members. Reaching out to wider network members provided opportunities for them to develop network projects. This was also potentially beneficial for network member learning and development, providing access to opportunities that might otherwise be closed to them, as explained by a Network co-chair in Government Department 1:

"...it helps with their development, so opportunities to maybe lead on quite large projects that are going across government that they may not have the opportunity to do in their day jobs". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

Networks also developed career events. For example, people in the Black Community within the Race and Ethnicity Network at FinanceCo had run mentoring programmes, in essence a positive action initiative. This involved organising workshop sessions in which colleagues discussed how they had navigated their career in FinanceCo.

4.3 The power of sharing lived experience

The power of sharing the lived experience of ethnic minority colleagues was a theme that emerged time and time again from all the networks, network members and other stakeholders that participated in this research. This was a way of network memberships sharing common experiences, helping network members to feel less isolated and be themselves while building and expressing solidarity across network members. This was clearly articulated by a network member in Trust 1:

"...to stand up for my own race and for other races. And that's something which is really important to me. That is why I feel like having a protected space is good as well. Because I'm sure there's adults the same age as me who have not grown past that, who still want to dissociate from their skin colour and be accepted as another race. I think just having a space where it's okay. You should be proud of

your skin colour, your heritage". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Trust 1)

There was also some perception that ethnic minority communities needed to recognise their own potential to make stereotype, with the same network member in Trust 1 discussing 'ingrained racism within our communities':

"My grandparents, it's so strange, they came to England and they faced racism. And now, the main people which are moving into the areas where they live are Romanians or Eastern Europeans and they're being racist towards them and making sly comments. And it's just messed up. It is really messed up. And I think that's why it's important that it's a BAME Network. Because we should be standing in solidarity with each other. We've all gone through similar experiences. We should have that space that we're showing solidarity between all races and not just one or two. It's everyone. And that we all need to let go of our engrained stereotypes about others". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Trust 1)

Network members also felt that sharing their experiences with other organisational actors was a key way in which they could act as a critical friend to organisations: 'speaking truth to power'.

All the networks participating in this research felt that they were a critical friend to their organisations. They provided accounts of how powerful it had been, and continued to be, for them to share their experiences as ethnic minority workers. In sharing their experiences they conveyed their material and structure implications day-to-day experience such as the processes contributing to the persistence of organisational glass ceilings. As one research participant commented, network members 'turned numbers into names' feeding into the momentum for change:

"... what the network does is turn those numbers into names and so the network then tells us, this is my story. So you're talking about lack of promotion, this is what I experienced. This is what it looks like for me, this is what somebody said, this is the kind of behaviours that cause that inequity, this is the mindset that causes that inequity, this is how it feels, this is what it looks like, this is who did it. So they bring it to life, they bring the data and our commercial story to a human level and massively swing the motivation to change". (HR manager, FinanceCo).

Providing further explanation that the difference that these conversations made, this research participant added:

"It's not until our partners hear the stories that they are really switched on to make the change that's required, that's been an incredible success '[They say] I've just been on a network event and they just told us this happens and I say, yes, and I've just spent the last five years telling you that happens but your mind hasn't been open to hearing it...' (HR manager, FinanceCo).

A closely connected practice involved several networks advocating for the introduction of reverse mentoring, and it had been implemented in their organisations, for example in CouncilCo and the NHS Trusts.

Reverse mentoring aims to provide a structure within which people with different identity characteristics and backgrounds can learn from each other (Browne, 2021). Typically, it involves people in senior positions learning from people in less senior positions, building their understanding of issues from their respective perspectives. It can be drawn on to develop understanding of the experiences of under-represented groups. People from those under-represented groups can also benefit through access to new experiences, ideas and an expansion of their (potential) social networks.

Research participants provided positive feedback on their experiences of reverse mentoring and how it had been awareness raising and built understanding of the value of positive action initiatives:

"But my journey of reverse mentoring BAME people in the network has helped my understanding of the issues that the people from a BAME background play, and has really opened my eyes to how we need to have positive actions. It's not enough just to say we've got an equal opportunities policy. It's not enough. There needs to be positive action to address some of these inequalities that exist in our organisation and in society. And it's something that I will be hugely grateful for in my career that I've worked for the BAME Network to help me understand that". (Senior manager, CouncilCo)

There were teething problems with reverse mentoring initiatives. For example a network member in Trust 1 described how the experience was not quite what she had anticipated. She was of Asian heritage and was paired with a Black colleague. They got on very well but their experiences were very similar. She explained:

"However, the point of the reverse mentorship was to match me with a white colleague. I think that was the plan or the expected plan, so that I could tell them about my experience and they could share about their experience". (Network member, Trust 1)

She reflected that the reverse mentoring initiative might have been better advertised and that there was a need to discuss this with the recently appointed new network chair.

Network members were also sometimes invited to team meetings, particular in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. For example in Government Department 1 network members had often volunteered to attend team meetings in different work areas to talk about racism and the importance of fostering race equity. This provided support to the Network co-chair, and helped to increase the reach of conversations:

"I've seen a lot of them actually step up last year and help facilitate really difficult conversations around the Black Lives Matter movement and why that was all happening and really helping people understand and share experiences. There was a lot of that as well. Whenever I do ask for help, they do step up. I usually do get a volunteer to go speak at a team meeting or something like that as well on a more ad hoc basis". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

4.4 Management engagement

Race networks had also invited members of Executive Leadership teams to network meetings. This fulfilled several functions. First it provided a means of network members sharing their work experiences and concerns with senior leaders. As one network member explained:

"Because one of the things that's going to make a change is when people of other ethnicities understand the problems faced by other ethnicities. For me, I hear stories from all over the world, from different ethnic groups and whatever, I'm, wow, damn, that... So I think this is the way that the world becomes a better place. We actually hear the stories and understand the experiences of all ethnicities". (Network member, ethnic minority man, CouncilCo)

In some organisations this took the form of roundtables of network members, senior leaders and race champions. These interactions also helped in building a relationship with those senior leaders and race champions, and fostering commitment to and momentum for change. For example, a Trust 2 network meeting observed for this research was attended by the Chief Executive of the Trust. The meeting included discussion of progress on ethnic minority recruitment and progression, a presentation and discussion of the statistical evidence and agreement of next steps. Alongside pay gaps these were key areas for discussion for race networks across the research.

In FinanceCo each network had a Human Resource Diversity and Inclusion lead who attended the majority of network meetings, contributing to discussions as a network, including the direction of the network.

In one case study organisation there was some wariness of having a senior manager included in network membership, with the research participant emphasising the importance of mutual trust:

"And I think any organisation that says yes we're going to have a staff network but we're going to have this principal manager as part of it, I'd be very wary of a network like that. They've got to be able to trust you as well as you trust them". (Ex network chair, union network 1)

He was not alone in thinking that care needed to be taken around management engagement. As a senior manager in Staff Network 1 commented:

"It's such a complicated area and trying to convince people is not easy, but then having some strategic support for those, there is some real benefit for that. Sometimes it's about getting the ear of the right person and the right person to sit in the right meetings". (Senior Manager and network chair, Staff Network 1)

In Trust 1, the network members interviewed appeared to think that management lacked conviction in their support for the race network and progress on race equity:

"They think to combat racism and focus on the satisfaction of our colleagues that aren't white, we're going to give them a network. We've done that. Tick off our box. But they're not really following through. And in their heads, they think that they are, but they're not. And this is what I mean when I say that white colleagues, even though their hearts are in the right place and they want to do something about it, because they don't experience it, they're not 100% behind it..." (Network member, Trust 1)

Overall, though, Race Networks were striving to build allies, connecting to people in power and influence as they went along, having a strong perception that those relationships were essential in order to foster positive change in organisational cultures. They wanted the race network to be involved in decision-making making around race equity, as one participant noted: 'to be at that table to make those decisions' and to avoid the potential pitfall of the networks work becoming a tick box exercise, avoiding 'token gestures'.

4.5 Working with allies

As has already been implied, all the networks participating in this research emphasised the importance of 'core members' working with 'allies'.

Race network sponsors and champions were seen as key allies. For example, in FinanceCo partners were reported to be supporting the network co-chairs, providing voice at a senior level where needed. This engagement with allies went beyond partner level opening up membership to any colleague who was keen to engage with race equity, in effect helping to foster a community of better practice around in appropriate behaviours vis-à-vis avoiding microaggressions and discrimination:

"But what they also do is the community part, they develop allies, so they find people who are joining who are interested in making things better and they say, this is how you can act and you can behave". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

"... in our sessions, in our communications, we are always reminding people that it's open to everybody. And recognise the fact that in order to have change in a big organisation like this where it's not the ethnic minorities who are in those key roles, you need to have those allies and our White counterparts included in the conversation with us". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

The murder of George Floyd was a pivotal moment with network members thinking 'no longer we're preaching to the converted. It doesn't make sense'.

Typically, the race networks included White colleagues, allies, in network membership and on network steering groups, emphasising the importance of widening network participation in order to build race literacy, made progress on race equity; and to make that progress a shared responsibility. The following quotations illustrate support for this amongst network ethnic minority members in CouncilCo, emphasising the importance of allies in building shared responsibility for race equity:

"... I felt it was important, if we want to widen participation in order to affect change it's not just the responsibility of Black, Asian, or Multiple Ethnic staff members to do that. It's the responsibility of all of us". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

"The BAME community is not going to shift this because you're not in the boardroom. So you need those in the boardroom to come [to meetings, hear lived experience] and say, scandalous. Go back to the boardroom and say, that's just not acceptable and try and drive the change there". (Network member, Government Department)

Networks were coming up with creative ways to build allies. For example a FinanceCo co-chair explained how the network had hosted an award ceremony in November 2020. It developed an award category of 'an Ally to the Race and Ethnicity Network'. Nominations were restricted to non BAME people as the network had identified the importance of White people needing to be allies for the

objectives that the network was trying to achieve.

A White British ally in CouncilCo discussed how he had attended a network steering group meeting following complete of reverse mentoring with an ethnic minority network member. The network chair subsequently invited him to get involved in the group which he was keen to do, further explaining his attraction to working in allied space thus:

"[The network chair] sent me thousands of invites and I was delighted to come along. It's been a fantastic experience since, I think it was 2019 that I joined. So the reason for joining was really I grew up in an area that wasn't particularly diverse, down in the South West. I had a fantastic reverse mentoring experience with [my colleague]. I was seeing the problems in the industry first hand from friends and colleagues, trying to progress. And just thought, it's something that we can try and change. Or I'm in a position that I can try and change within our own team and industry, really". (Network member and ally, CouncilCo)

As noted in chapter 2, previous research has found that having allies in ethnic minority network spaces could generate unease (Gutierrez (2021). There was some evidence of this unease, with gendered dynamics in ally engagement, as explained in the following quotation from a network member in Trust 1, an Asian heritage woman, expressing cautious and qualified support for including allies in network meetings:

"And it's a difficult one because nothing rubs me the wrong way as, you know that statement of someone mansplaining something to you? You've said something, but a man's going to say it and use different languages, exactly what you said, but they'll be given the credit. It's like that, the whitesplaining. And I can admire where they're coming from and admire that they're putting so much effort into it. But at the end of the day, they've never had to live through it. I feel like in those networks, priority should be given to the voices of black, Asian, minority and ethnic communities who, like me, probably are maybe the only person that's non-white in their team and feel like they won't be able to speak up in those team meetings". (Network member, Trust 1)

Networks discussed finding a balance between ethnic minority members having a safe space to share concerns with each other, and being inclusive of allies:

"Obviously, we had that social space and safe space for us to talk about issues, such as the Atlanta shootings and the rise in anti-Asian sentiment ... but also have a space for everyone to come together, have that strong ally-ship". (Network member, Government Department 1)

Another network member in the same organisation and network conveyed that striking this balance was not always easy, with issues around helping allies to feel at ease when difficult issues were being discussed. However, with a little management and organisation, safe space discussions could be managed by network members being assertive about where some meetings and conversations should be restricted to ethnic minority members only, and warning members about when a conversation might be 'hard-hitting':

"...we're always aware we don't want to make people who haven't experienced these things feel uncomfortable or like they've offended us in some way. But we do have specific safe space discussions as well. We say, it's only open to you, X minority. We're going to be talking about this really specific thing and it's going to be really open, so it's only open to these people. So I think sometimes, yes, it does become more difficult, depending who's in the room. But I think we try our level best to counteract that by either caveating that it's only a specific group that we're going to be talking to or, we're going to be talking about some pretty heavy-hitting stuff, so come along but be prepared, type thing". (Network member, Government Department 1)

4.6 Collaboration with other network groups and the building of intersectional sensitivity

All the participating organisations had multiple staff networks organised around a range of protected characteristics. HR managers had led on the development of forums that brought representatives of the different networks, as well as trade unions where recognised. This was seen as a recognition of commonality of interests of different staff networks, as well as issues of intersectionality embodied across network members with multiple and fluid identities.

A sign of perceived commonality of interest occurred in CouncilCo when the network chair sought a budget for the BAME network. She made a point of trying to ensure that other identity networks also accessed a budget. This was important to her as she felt passionately that the organisation should be inclusive of everyone, explaining:

"I'm leading the Black, Asian and Multiple Ethnic network, but my whole thing is about making sure that our organisation is more inclusive. It hasn't been inclusive, and I want it to be inclusive. I don't just want it to be inclusive for people of colour. I want it to be inclusive across the whole spectrum. Yes, that's just intrinsic for me". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

Similarly in Government Department 2 a network member reflected on the need to foster conversations that signalled the value of different networks:

"The problem with intersectionality and the Race Network is I expect what takes precedence... That's not the way we think. But some people may think that in the LGBTQ space, that's more important than the race space. It's trying to work with those people and say, all of these things matter within context". (Network member, Government Department 2)

Table 4a maps some the inter-network collaborations that had evolved across the case study organisations.

As in other networks participating in the research, in the Race and Ethnicity Network at FinanceCo internet collaborations took place organically. A network chair reflected on the need to collaborate only when it made sense not least in the context of ongoing network resource pressures:

"Intersectionality is huge for us, so we will either organically collaborate ... when we see a crossover. ... I think since we've gotten a lot of traction, a lot of networks want to collaborate with us more now, which is great, but only when it makes sense, I'd say, so we're seeing more of that collaboration piece, but I'm sure there's more opportunities. Just like the other network leads, we've only got so many hours in the day, so we have to be quite resourceful". (Race & Ethnicity Network chair, FinanceCo).

These examples perhaps add to evidence of the emergence of transversal coalition politics reflected in identity network collaborations (Colgan 2016).

Despite the collaborations, there were some signs of tensions. NHS Trust 1 reflected on a perception amongst BAME Network members that the BAME Network had become 'the golden child of the Trust'. One suggested solution to this problem was that Trust leadership should work harder to engage with all staff networks:

"I think the leadership need to be also in touch with every group within the trust and they need to be willing to give an ear to everybody". (Network member, Trust 1)

While progress had been made on intersectional collaboration in FinanceCo there was also some acknowledgement of more to be done:

"So we had lots and lots of events and activity across the business, often duplicating themes, when we could have really emphasised the intersectionality of it. So we had parenting through our LGBT lens, our Black lens, our South Asian network, as they were called at the time. And really, the conversation was quite similar. It would have been really interesting if it was more intersectional". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

Table 4a: Inter-network collaborations

Organisation	Cross network structures	Networks involved	Examples of activities
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CouncilCo	Monthly chairs network meeting.	B.A.M.E Network; women's network; LGBT+; disability network; family loop network (caring responsibilities)	Shared calendar of events on a sharepoint site to avoid clashes; co-running events; B.A.M.E Network providing support for a PRIDE event
Government Department 1	Bi-weekly meetings of the Women's Empowerment Working Group	FAME, Women Empowered	Collaboration on a series of joint intersectionality events on the lived experience of ethnic minority women.
FinanceCo		Race & Ethnicity Network (REN), Unity (Unity is a professional network in EY member firm offices around the globe, promoting LGBT+ inclusivity); women's network, religious networks	South Asian Community and Sikh Community of REN joined forces to discuss the Indian farmer protests.
Government Department 2		National Race Network, LGBTQ+ Network Disability Network	Joint delivery of workshop sessions around intersectionality for Black History Month.

4.7 Union engagement

Some case study organisations recognised trade unions and some network members were also union members.

Younger members tended to not be members of trade unions, indicating that they had not really thought about it or had not been approached about union membership. Older network members tended to be union members and some had been or were union representatives. They tended to speak about the protective function of trade unions alongside a perception that if, for example, network members were involved in discipline and grievance procedures they would need the protection of a trade union:

"a number of Black, Asian minority ethnic colleagues do not find themselves to be members of the trade unions until it's too late. ... So one of the things that I've been speaking about to some of my networks and trade unions, that the trade unions need to come into the networks and actually get people to understand the role of trade unions and the role of employee networks. When you run into trouble, don't go to your employee network. They don't know the employee policy, they're not there to support you. So that's something that I think the BAME community could encourage more people to become members because of some of the issues that are faced by that community within the workforce". (Network member, Government Department)

There were reports of unions visiting network meetings to engage with network members, listening to their concerns, and being encouraged to do so by network chairs.

Concern was expressed about a lack of diversity in trade unions and it was felt that this might be inhibiting ethnic minority staff joining unions. There was some sign of union caution about the role of staff networks:

"I think off the back of the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been a tokenistic approach to race equality, but also some initiatives to say, we are going to focus on race. Whether they will achieve anything is another matter, so our position is not to oppose those networks or to disregard them. To actually support them in a way that we work with them if they want to engage with us, but we have that cautiousness and wariness". (Union network 2)

However, the general view was that it was important for race networks to build good relationships and solidarity with trade unions, both for individual representation and as an ally in the collective pursuit of race equity:

"I think it's really, really, really necessary for them to have a good relationship. With the race networks, and everybody in that case. And to be fair, you need to feel comfortable, if you're speaking to a union representative you have to feel comfortable, and you have to feel as though that they have your best interests at heart. So they have an understanding of some of the issues that the BAME network, the members face, they're going to be better to help you and serve you. Because sometimes it might be the case that you might have some situation where you feel that you're being discriminated against because of your colour or whatever. If you don't have an understanding of some of these issues, you're never ready to represent me". (Network and union member, CouncilCo)

That understanding was not always perceived to be there, network members valuing the understanding that their fellow network members could bring in difficult situations.

4.8 Building cross-organisational identity networks

A cross Government Department Civil Service Race Forum had been set up which both Government Departments 1 and 2 were members of. Part of the rationale had been that individual race networks in Government Departments had tended to be focused on their own goals, making the forum an umbrella for all the networks.

One of the current co-chairs emphasised the value of using this forum to build connections across a number of domains, within and beyond Government Departments, providing support to a wider range of organisations, promoting the value of race networks:

"[My co-chair] and I have been really clear around we want the Civil Service Race Forum to be a leading light to other networks, but also as well the other point, we're not looking to compete with anyone else. We're just looking to build. I think what I mean by that term build is that we understand, within other home departments, partner organisations, agencies, non-departmental public bodies, etc., places which have their own race networks, their own individual home networks, the leaders are also as well on their own different journeys". (Network co-chair)

There were sometimes countervailing forces where there might ostensibly be a logic for bringing networks together. In FinanceCo, there was a perception that some of the religious networks still outside of the Race & Ethnicity Network felt a little competitive. As the HR manager explained:

"Our Jewish network are not sure whether they're a religion or an ethnicity. And we're still trying to work through that with them. In fact, they may become one of our race and ethnicity networks rather than our religion... The boxes are just convenience, really. We just say, put yourselves where you want to be". (Human resource manager, FinanceCo)

4.9 Being outward looking and engaging with wider society

In different ways networks were trying to be outward looking in a way reminiscent of Githens and Aragon's (2009) discussion of networks that work beyond organisational boundaries.

While network members were clearly trying to engage with workplace inequalities, they also made time to channel their skills, expertise and interests to engage with race equity beyond the workplace. For example, in CouncilCo the BAME network was keen to engage with how the pandemic was impacting on the immediate local and wider London community. Steering group members were instrumental in their approach. This included building links with academic experts who could provide information on the problems including around data and ethnicity and ethnic health inequalities.

The network had also sponsored a film capturing the lives and experiences of the Windrush generation living in the local community. During Black History Month 2021 the network hosted an online event which premiered the film bringing together some of the film participants and members of their families, network members and allies.

To take a second example, in Government Department 1 the FAME network set up a Policy and Analysis Working Group that engaged with ethnic inequalities, providing advice to relevant government departments.

To reiterate, these examples reflect a commitment to anti-racism activity, and race equity, not only in their workplace but also vis-à-vis structural inequalities in wider society.

4.10 Making use of technology in remote collaboration

As in other organisations, increased working from home and video-conferencing software such as MS Teams and Zoom had moved network meetings online. While pre-pandemic some networks had been using video-conferencing there were mixed feelings about the enforced reliance on this mode of communication. Some network members felt more disengaged in an online context:

"Because we've all been working remotely, we're not really networking in the same space that we would have. I don't feel it's the same. I don't feel like I'm actively involved as I would normally have been". (Network member, CouncilCo)

4.11 Network sustainability and succession planning

Most of the networks seemed mindful of the importance of succession planning and saw the building of leadership teams as supportive of this. For example, a network co-chair in Government Department 1 commented:

"I think if we don't work on our succession planning and if we don't get the right people in to follow on after us, things may not be so successful". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

The shared approach to leadership discussed in the previous chapter (section 3.3.2) was felt to be important to succession planning, building leadership capabilities that could be drawn on in the future.

5. Network challenges

Despite the progress and successes reported on in the next chapter, staff race networks perceived there to be a number of challenges encountered in pursuing their aims.

This chapter reports on those challenges, including the adequacy of network resources, uneven organisational buy-in to an anti-racism agenda, the role of line managers in this buy-in gap, a persistence of racist stereotypes and a lack of accountability for progress on race equity. The effectiveness of network leaders was sometimes challenged and there were also concerns about network sustainability.

5.1 Resources stretched to the limit

While organisations often provided facilities time for network leaders, this was invariably insufficient for the range of work that needed to be undertaken.

Network leaders were often happy to make time to engage in network activities, using their spare time during evenings and weekends, because they felt passionate about the network and what it was trying to achieve. The following quotations from a network member in CouncilCo are illustrative:

"it's often difficult to get what you want done during the work hours, so you do it in your own time, or you work a longer day, for example, if you need to get access to the resources at work. Or, you need to send something out, or you need to plan an event going forward. You do that, you catch up over the weekend to try and see, where are we at, what else needs to be done? And plan it forward. I think as a whole the organisation says you can use your volunteering hours to do that, but it's more than the volunteering hours. It's like another part time or a full-time job, depending on where we are and what's happening during the calendar". (Network member, CouncilCo)

"It is pretty exhausting feeling that you have to educate people, but what else. It's tiring, but remember those that went before us they were tired but they continued". (Network member, CouncilCo)

Demands brought by the Covid-19 pandemic context were felt to have intensified these pressures with network members, volunteering their time, but feeling at full stretch:

"And how do we maximise involvement and engagement using what little resource we have, given that we're relying essentially on people putting in their own time of their own free will. That's the constant uphill battle, I suppose". (Network member, Government Department 1)

There were concerns that the resources being made available by employers were inadequate and so impacting on the work of the network, as was the case in Government Department 2. Board members, including the network chair, were concerned that a lack of facilities time was adversely impacting on their work:

"We have a facility time allocated for [Board members], but as has already been said, we don't have enough time to give board members time to do the work effectively. So, we do a lot of it out of good will, because we know we're doing it for the benefit of others. But it's basically once a month, plus lots of ad hoc meetings and also recurring meetings to undertake events, to make sure we have everything in place". (Network co-chair, Government Department 2)

Uneven allocations of facilities time across Government Departments was a related concern expressed by research participants who questioned to fairness of this. It was felt to undermine organisational commitment to race equity. Network leaders wanted a degree of accountability for progress on race equity, which they felt would benefit the business:

"... we really want to speak truth to power. That's what we're doing. We have to make a difference and we said we'll be held accountable for all of our promises if we don't come through. ... And getting the resources to do the work it's a key problem. We need more time to do the work. [The network co-chair] will tell you, we have an allocation to do this work but it's not full time, and it needs to be more than fulltime never mind fulltime". (Network member, Government Department 2)

Issues around time for network activities were perhaps particularly acute in FinanceCo. Here the priority was for client facing staff to charge as much as possible which in turn helped career progression and organisational profitability. There was a structural barrier to taking time out to participate in network activities. As an HR manager explained:

"... if you take on a network role, and you've got a two-hour workshop in the day, where do you get those two hours back from? Because you can't charge yourself to a network, if that makes sense, because it's a voluntary role". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

This had been a significant issue for FinanceCo as many of its networks were run by internal-facing staff. As network activity was not chargeable, the hours being put in by network members were not being recognised. The institutional invisibility of the time network members invested in this activity, made it difficult for the organisation to understand why network members required resources and the scale of the resource needs.

Perceptions of inadequate network resources were reportedly putting some potential members off of getting too involved in the network. In FinanceCo it was suggested that this had become an issue for network member recruitment. There was a perception of a business case for addressing the problem. As the HR manager explained:

"Then in order to justify that to the business, of why they should invest in network leads and members to do the job, it's because if you look at the money lost due to attrition, because you bring someone in and they're only here for a year, the money being lost there is millions. So I think there is definitely a business case for that, and if people were to argue about, oh, it's too much, then just think about the money you're losing by people leaving so often". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

Disincentives for network involvement were also apparent in CouncilCo. In the following quotation a network member emphasised that it was of fundamental importance that the network was appropriately resourced and that management took responsibility for organisational change:

"But it needs to be centrally supported from the core, not this sub-group where no one's getting paid to do anything. It's just kind of if you've got time pop along and see what you can do. So that was one of my points for not really getting too involved, but obviously still keeping an ear to the ground". (Network member, CouncilCo)

Senior management prioritisation of enough time could also be an issue. For example, in Trust 2 a HR manager suggested that it could be a challenge for the executive team to find enough time to sponsor the network and 'unlock things'. An example of this was around parking. Consultants are being given parking spaces, while other staff were struggling with parking (with ethnic minority staff over represented amongst non-senior staff). Senior management needed to make time to foster a conversation with all staff about this.

Staying with Trust 2, there was a feeling that the Trust had been dealing with easier issues, 'low hanging fruit' and there was need to engage with difficult issues that were being raised by the race network. For example, the point at which a patient who is racist and/or homophobic should not be treated. It was felt that policies and practices needed to be put in place to address this.

5.2 Patchy organisational buy-in to race equity

It was common for research participants to indicate that while some progress had been made, some managers and organisational areas had bought into the race equity agenda more than others. For example, in NHS Trust 2, some departments were making efforts to change their culture, for example developing grass roots recruitment activity to increase minority representation in health roles. However, other departments had yet to buy-in. Similar concerns were expressed in CouncilCo:

"And there are some who are very sincere and they do want to deliver out change, but there are some that still haven't left the starting line. This is years into it". (Network member, CouncilCo)

Relatedly, concerns were often expressed about the pace of change, particular vis-à-vis ethnic pay gaps and the segregation of ethnic minorities into less senior work. For example, in FinanceCo a network co-chair discussed how it could be depressing to have a network member share their experiences with you in confidence, support them in the grievance process and find that they leave the organisation. In CouncilCo some staff were feeling the benefits of progress on race equity, and others not. As noted earlier in this report, the lack of ethnic minority representation in senior management was an ongoing source of concern. Again the following quotations are illustrative of network member dissatisfaction, research participants expressing varying degrees of optimism:

"...we've released the Anti-Racism Commitments, but yet people are still leaving. ... Change is being made, by the way. I'm not trying to put FinanceCo down. There's been programmes [put] in place, but it's not quick enough, so the work that we do in the Race and Ethnicity Network, I feel like, can speed it up". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

"I think it's still a work in progress, I think there's pockets where the evidence will suggest that things have improved significantly. But there's still, I think, people who don't necessarily feel this has improved for them. And part of the challenge is trying to actually expose those areas and understand what's actually going on in those areas, as to why things aren't necessarily changing". (Network member, CouncilCo)

"So we have made some progress, but I would say it's not substantial ... They always say, you can't be what you can't see. And that is some of the issues where you look at the organisation, and you just think, is it going to be too hard for me?" (Network member, Government Department)

There was some reflection on the difficulties of holding conversations about race, the 'fragility' of those conversations when some of the learning being communicated is received as hard-hitting. This is conveyed by the following quotation from a network chair trying to have these conversations:

"There's a fragility there, if I'm being honest ... I see the reception towards women network events. Ninety per cent of our leadership in the team that we sit in day-to-day are White men, and for some reason, they can process the need for gender equality and will happily reinforce the events that are coming up, the messages, we receive emails. But due to the fragility of race conversations, there seems to be a reluctance to really over-communicate about it because I think people are petrified of getting it wrong ... I think that does lead

into why we don't get the buy-in, because it's so uncomfortable for these people to have the dialogue, because they have to recognise the privileges within themselves. And it's not a nice journey for everybody". (Network co-chair, FinanceCo)

The sensitivity was echoed by the network chair in CouncilCo:

"I've had to be really quite considered about everything I've done in this organisation. Because on the one hand I'm standing up and telling people about white privilege and on the other hand I need to work with those same people to make sure that they don't feel ashamed. Rather that they're stimulated to action. That's a skill. There's no joke about this thing". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

Relatedly, the chair of Staff Network 1 emphasised the importance of 'trust'. While it was important to understand contextual challenges in progressing race equity it was also key for managers to follow through on their commitments:

"... there needs to be that level of trust, but that's hard fought and easily lost. I think we've been fortunate that our Commissioner has shown a really clear commitment to it, and our director's shown a clear commitment to it. The difficulty we've got is you're bound by certain events that happen to people, and you always look at people will play, and their reaction to it. There is a little bit that sometimes people talk a lot to this but don't actually follow it through". (Network chair, Staff Network 1)

A sense of a lack of progress could in turn lead to a perception of a lack of management commitment to race equality, as was the case for the following network member in CouncilCo discussing a lack of progress on race equity in recruitment:

"There's a plethora of talented people [in this city] who would do really well in some of these roles. There's lots of different ways to get this talent in. And you've got people on six figures who are struggling to get those people into the organisation". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, CouncilCo)

Perhaps echoing discussion of a politics of recognition (Yuval-Davis, 2011), several research participants discussed how a zero-tolerance approach to racism should have particular implications for managers who were clearly not going to buy into organisational efforts to challenge racism and actively promote race equity. It was argued that such managers should be seen as having an untenable position in the organisation and asked to leave. In one case study organisation this had happened, in another there was disillusion as it had not happened. Concern was expressed about the potential for tokenism imbuing senior management engagement with the promotion of race equity, as expressed by the following senior manager:

"One of the things I see in a lot of other organisations, especially in the private sector, is the chief executive and the executive directors all go, oh yes, we need this. Diversity inclusion is an important thing, so we'll establish these networks. We'll appoint a black or brown person to run them, and then we can say we've done our job and step away from it, because we've got the networks in place. And so many people I speak to who run those networks and are part of the networks, the senior leadership is not altering. All they've done is tick the box". (Senior manager)

However, these concerns are not restricted to the private sector. In one of the NHS Trust case studies related concerns were expressed that some managers felt that they could promote a few ethnic minority staff and that was the race equity box ticked. Frustration was expressed at the challenge of breaking an institutional cycle of white privilege. They explained:

"The key barriers it's we have infrastructural, structural, and deep-rooted issues. So, you've got a line of management and leadership who has been promoted by the one they were privileged, white privileges. ... So, they have promoted the same behaviour. The behaviour carries on the same behaviour. It's become accepted. They have got bias. They can't see around them, God, I'm doing something wrong, this is not acceptable. In their bias, it's all right, it is acceptable". (Network co-chair, NHS)

5.3 The role of line managers

It has been argued that the agency of managers means that the perennial challenge of the equality implementation gap 'can be reduced but never completely closed'. (Noon and Ogbonna, 2021).

Perceptions of the challenges of engaging line managers in organisational race equity agendas provides further justification for these concerns. For example, this is illustrated by uneven network member line management support for their network involvement, particularly allowing time for network meetings and other activities. Network members in lower paid front-line jobs working with the public on a day-to-day basis explained how they bore the brunt of unsupportive line management. In so far as there was a co-worker backlash against network participation (Friedman, 2011), this took the form of line managers not valuing their colleagues' network activity.

Network members in management positions were conscious that in some ways it was easier for them to carve out time to attend meetings than it was for more junior colleagues. In Government Department 1, there were examples of positive line management support for network members but it could be inconsistent:

"I'm in a pretty good situation in that my line manager is super-supportive, and he's been amazing, and really supportive of me doing this. I think it depends on the amount of time, but I think sometimes we'll get great, amazing support with line managers, but then sometimes you get ones who push back a bit. And I think that's been a problem for some of our volunteers". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

In CouncilCo while different directorates had instigated anti-racism activities, some managers were unsupportive of network member activities. As one senior manager explained:

"there will still be [network members] who'll be like, oh yes, that's at 2 o'clock. I can't attend it because my manager's going to moan, or my manager's just going to be not so much for it. They come out and say, oh, no, we need you to deliver on this piece of work, or they might just make it a bit more difficult. So there will still be that going on in the organisation, definitely". (Senior Manager, CouncilCo)

One of the organisational responses in CouncilCo was for line managers to be required to undertake mandatory unconscious bias training to try to change mindsets and behaviours. Similarly, in FinanceCo line managers, who were called counsellors, had a suite of training which was mandatory as part of the organisation's 'Inclusion for All' webinar programme engaging with bias, stereotypes, privilege and the Diversity and Inclusion strategy. As a human resource manager explained, they had recently added a 'Race Fluency' webinar:

"...we found the problem was people would talk about some differences, but they would not talk about race. They didn't feel they had the language or the confidence to name a Black person or an Asian person or a Muslim person". (HR manager, FinanceCo)

FinanceCo had also introduced 'Counsellor Connect meetings', again the HR manager explaining:

"we have counsellor connect meetings, so they regularly get together and we talk to them again about issues that emerge. Gaps in outcomes, stories, who is in your population, do you spend as much time with everybody, what are the factors that mean you haven't connected with someone compared to someone that you have?" (HR manager, FinanceCo)

Reportedly, the Race Fluency activity was leading to more constructive conversations about cultural issues in workplace experiences and relationships. There was concern that rather than line managers not wanting to engage with good practice, they did not have time to do so which was contributing to uneven progress in changing management behaviours.

In Government Department 2, some parts of the organisation were described as having Diversity and Inclusion Groups and others not; and lack of line management leadership around this was felt to be inhibiting progress on race equity.

"I think the [line manager] can offer extraordinary support within that conversation and that makes a massive difference. I've seen both sides of that. I've experienced when a [line manager] has been really supportive and that has made a massive difference. So, allocating time, creating that open space, so that people can take that time out to go into that D&I group to talk. ... I think that [line managers], from my perspective, need to firstly encourage from their leadership team by opening the conversation and most importantly allocating the resource. So, actually pushing back to their senior leaders to say, I'm allocating this time". (Network member, Government Department 2)

5.4 Ethnic minority staff distrust, and the persistence of stereotypes and inequalities

During the research focus groups with network members some participants expressed scepticism about their organisations' commitment to pursuing an anti-racism agenda.

Trying to foster changes in organisational cultures was made challenging by some of the toxic contours of those cultures. A dynamic in this was the persistence of stereotypes of ethnic minority staff. For example, a network member in NHS Trust 1 discussed how when he tried to provide support to ethnic minority colleagues in disciplinary and grievance cases Black people could be labelled as aggressive. As he explained:

"Because for example, one of the thing that actually usually comes up in most of the cases that I've been involved with, black people are loud. And when we are angry, when we feel actually a sense of injustice, we are even much louder. And most of the times our behaviour tends to be misconstrued as being aggressive". (Network member, ethnic minority man, NHS Trust 1)

A network co-chair in NHS Trust 2 was also concerned about 'a lot of mistrust' amongst ethnic minority staff, noting:

"They've been through all the inequalities, different concerns, and they're thinking, why now? Are we going to be heard? What's going to be different?" (Network co-chair NHS Trust 2)

5.5 Accountability and responsibility for progress on race equity

Research participants, including network members and senior management, perceived that the balance of accountability was with the organisation rather than the network for pushing through positive change.

One participant described race networks as 'the eyes and ears for the organisation'. Research participants conveyed that organisational leaders had to engage with the information that they were receiving, taking action to address ethnic inequalities and racisms, otherwise the network efforts could be seen as 'pointless'. There were concerns about the degree of accountability for that action. The following quotation was from a research participant who was particularly candid:

"In the space for Diversity & Inclusion I don't think managers and senior managers are accountable at all. I always talk about, in the senior leadership team, there's only two things that really trigger them. Number one, if there's political will, and secondly if there's managerial will. And what I mean is not their management, but managers need to feel that someone's looking or someone's scrutinising or something's coming or they need to produce something. And if they haven't got that, in the end Diversity & Inclusion is just an objective sitting on someone's development framework for the rest of their days. It's not worth the paper it's written on if no one follows that up". (Network chair, Staff Network 1)

Similarly, in CouncilCo a senior manager noted:

"... one of the biggest drives, for me, is getting the senior leadership in our organisation to authentically own, be responsible for, but also understand that they are accountable for diversity inclusion in our organisation". (Senior manager, CouncilCo)

5.6 The role of network leadership and organisational culture

There were instances where the effectiveness of network leaders was challenged. For example, a questioning of whether those in the job were the best people for those roles.

One or two networks were felt to have diluted their focus on race. One research participant appeared to imply that the earlier influence of Union Network 1 had been diluted through a process of incorporation into management. The following quotation is from a research participant who in the process felt that the pursuit of race equity had been muted with those having a more critical perspective and inclination to challenge being in the minority:

"You listen to some people having discussions about racism, about society, and I just feel sometimes people are naïve. They give excuses to things that are going on that are quite clear, and you think to yourself you can't excuse everything, some things are black and some things are white, and you have to be able to understand that. But I just felt that with our group there were too many people willing to just let things go and not challenge, even from within. And had we have been stronger from within, had we have been more astute. Had there have been more people who could see what was going on, that the leadership was not necessarily representing them...". (Ex network chair, Union Network 1)

In parallel there seemed to have been a movement from having a focus on race pursued through Union Network 1 to having a Staff Network Group that had a more general focus on the protected characteristics rather than a specific focus on race.

In this vein, there was some perception, particularly in Trust 1 that the BAME network was too passive. A network members who engaged with both the BAME Network and LGBT network felt that both were too passive, but that ultimately this was due to an organisational culture which did not like to be challenged. Her perception is worth quoting at length:

"I think the LGBT Network has the same issue as the BAME Network as well, where it's very passive because it's always been passive and no one's really challenged the way things have been done. And that's another thing. I think just with NHS in general, everyone's very quick to say, ask the question, challenge us. But when people are actually challenged or asked a question, they are knocked down or they said, we'll take that away from this meeting, have another meeting. But that other meeting never actually happens. And that's not just my experience. That's what I've seen that has happened in all aspects. Not just the networks, but any consultations for new business ideas. It's already decided. And that's why staff feel like there's no point in joining a network or completing a staff survey, because nothing's going to change". (Network member, Trust 1)

5.7 Network sustainability, recognition of workloads and the ability of networks to foster change

Network leaders seemed acutely sensitive to their members' time constraints.

A network co-chair in NHS Trust 2 described how earlier on in the life of the BAME network it had been important to conduct a survey of network members to gauge the best time for them to meet as staff were working a variety of shifts. It had been important to engage with line managers, for example encouraging them to release staff for 30 minutes on a day shift so that they could participate in meetings. There has been some creative thinking around this, including the development of a network podcast. Helping the network raise awareness of the network across a wider Trust audience, this initiative has also provided another mechanism for those who might struggle to attend network meetings to catch up on developments. The Trust Board has supported this.

Concerns about the sustainability of networks was reflected in several network accounts of member fatigue. This followed an intensive period of network activity following the murder of George Floyd, alongside the additional demands of the pandemic. Where possible, networks tried to ease some of the pressure on members, in the case of CouncilCo this included by pulling back a little on cross-network collaboration:

"...everybody, all of the networks are doing this on a voluntary basis. And last year was so busy. We did so much. It's not sustainable. So we've had to step down a little bit from some of the activity, which I think is right". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

This easing off was also apparent in Government Department 1 where one network respondent described having a network 'inter-network lead', who led on managing that relationship with the other networks:

"Last year I think we had a few more events than this year, so we had a pretty good series of events around collaborating with different networks. Our lead had a little bit less capacity this year because her day job, she's been really busy, so we've had a bit less capacity to do that or continue conversations". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

This perhaps brings us back to the importance of adequate resourcing of networks given the contributions that they are making to corporate objectives. One network chair articulated a recurring theme:

"This is a labour of love, we are working on this in the night, at weekends ... in terms of thinking about networks that organisations really have to understand the power of networks and give the due respect that they need, i.e., you cannot rely on the good will of volunteers to... For this network we're delivering corporate objectives here, we are making [the organisation] look good, and I speak for all of the networks ... And so there needs to be an acknowledgement about just the level of commitment that is being shown by networks". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

A related issue raised was the ability of networks to deliver, alongside a questioning of their ability to achieve meaningful change. Network leaders felt that they had a responsibility to deliver on change for their members, albeit that ultimately the senior leadership of organisations were seen as accountable for change.

This theme of the importance of 'responsibility' will be returned to in the next chapter. However, it is important to reiterate here that achieving harder outcomes is important to network survival. One network co-chair recalled encountering a colleague in the corridor and asking him why he had stopped attending network meetings. The colleague explained that this was because 'nothing was getting done. People will follow you, either in politics or whatever you do depending on what you do, what changes following your action'.

6. Network success factors and learning points

6.1 Indicators of success

Research participants perceived that, in the short-term, indicators of network success were embodied in a range of organisational change. A recurring theme across the staff race networks was a lack of translation of this change into harder outcomes, 'getting things done', particularly the addressing of the under-representation of ethnic minorities in senior management. The networks were continuing to press for more tangible progress on race equity.

The short-term indicators of success included:

- more open conversations taking place at the workplace
- signs that senior leaders had bought into tackling racism
- perceptions of greater network engagement with allies
- other changes in equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice
- feeling empowered to foster change

We will now briefly look at each of these in turn.

6.1.1 Organisational change: more open discussions of race equity

One recurring theme across the different organisational case studies was how more open discussion of race inequities was taking place. Some participants took a historical perspective in reflecting on a discernible shift:

"The first day I started [over twenty years ago]. A Nigerian woman met me at the door and said to me, I'm so-and-so, we stick together, no matter what happens. In public we never argue. If you're upset with something I say tell me personally. These people will use us against each other. So she gave me the whole brief, and we called it the Black Caucus. Unofficially it was called the Black Caucus, that black people never argued, or never allowed themselves to be manipulated. So imagine that, we've got the BAME network, and we're trying to address the issues openly now. And it's free for everybody to participate in and hear, rather than like a secret society. So yes, I hope that they're looking at the things that we've been discussing today and more". (Network member, CouncilCo)

Part of this openness included the perception of a cultural shift reflected in senior management being perceived as more approachable by network members. Participants in the race network case studies repeatedly emphasised the importance of open conversations about race in building momentum for race equity. It has been important to ask difficult and challenging questions, for example 'why

after 25 years are this group of (ethnic minority) workers still where they started?’

6.1.2 Organisational change: Senior leader buy-in to tackling racism

Related to this perception of signs of more race positive organisational cultures was a sense that the senior management of some of the case study organisations were demonstrating a genuine and tangible commitment to addressing race inequities, as the following quotation from a network chair illustrates:

"I think in terms of the way we have convened to widen participation across senior leaders who didn't feel that this was their job to sort out. I think we've enabled conversations to happen in a way that's stimulated more actions than would have occurred if it was just the organisation doing it corporately". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

6.1.3 Organisational change: greater network collaboration with allies

As found in other studies (see chapter 2), greater collaboration with network allies, non-ethnic minority colleagues, is part of the dynamics of building the momentum for changing organisational cultures.

All the networks participating in the present research felt that there were signs of connections being made. As noted in the previous chapter non-ethnic minority colleagues were becoming network members. Their activities ranged from signing up for the network newsletter and attending events and meetings, to undertaking roles in network governance structures. There were signs that some networks had seen a move from ethnic minority members being reluctant to see allies participating in this way to being more inclusive of allies:

"I think we're getting through to people, but one of the main blockers I've seen in the past is that people think it's a network only for people from a faith background or an ethnic minority. But I have seen a shift, especially since the Black Lives Matter movement last year, with our non-ethnic minority or non-connected with a faith colleagues joining the network to find out more about the whole learning". (Network member, Government Department 1)

6.1.4 Signs of further changes in equality, diversity and inclusion practice

Developments in equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practice were also seen as an indicator of network success. To varying degrees research participants felt that changes in equality and diversity and inclusion policy and practice had taken place. Table 6a is indicative of such changes, in the areas of monitoring progress and planning action, engaging with recruitment and progression barriers and network capability building.

Table 6a: Developments in policy and practice as an indicator of network success

Policy and practice area	Examples of practice changes
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Engaging with recruitment and progression barriers	• Gathering more intelligence on why network members were under-represented in senior roles • Round tables bringing senior staff and network members together engaging with lived experience • Red card to racism campaign engaging with bullying and harassment • Network members having discussions with senior staff about pipelines • Network member focus groups discussing barriers to progression • Reverse mentoring initiatives • More ethnic minority presence on recruitment panels • Introduction of a shadowing scheme • Other positive action programmes
Monitoring progress and planning action	• Strengthening equalities monitoring data • Network consultation, scrutiny, input on action plans, equality impact assessments • More intersectional sensitivity (cross network meetings)
Network capability building	• Facilities time for network roles • Network leader training • Supporting network intranet space • Keeping a network register (are you BAME or are you a non BAME ally?)

6.1.5 Feeling empowered to foster change

Despite the challenges outlined in the previous chapter, and frustrations with the degree and pace of progress on race equity, network members conveyed how they felt empowered to drive forward change. As the following quotation conveys, staff race networks provided a platform to make visible issues of importance to members:

"The BAME Network has given us a platform to actually raise these issues. ... we have been empowered, and I think that's the success of the BAME Network. That we have been empowered to make change". (Network member CouncilCo)

This sense of empowerment was discussed not only with respect to workplace equalities, but also the commitment of network members to wider engagement with race equity beyond the workplace. Relatedly, a network co-chair in Trust 2 discussed the importance of network leaders believing in themselves, reflecting on their purpose and remaining mindful of network priorities and goals.

6.2 Enablers of success

6.2.1 Senior leadership support for network aims, with management taking responsibility for race equity

Across the case study organisations research participants reported that senior leadership support was the single most important factor in a race network contributing to progress on race equity. The background of a senior leader could contribute to their drive for change across the organisation as was reported to be the case in CouncilCo:

"And the sponsorship of the chief executive is second to none on this agenda. He grew up in apartheid South Africa. And to say he'd got a passion for this agenda and addressing the quality of opportunities, is an understatement, frankly. And that's to do, I think, with his experience of his growing up in that apartheid regime". (Senior manager, CouncilCo)

This commitment had contributed to some movement away from an all White and mostly male senior management team.

6.2.2 The importance of relationship building

Relationship building was also seen as key in meeting network aims for a more inclusive and fairer workplace. Good relationships between network leaders were perceived as important, but also between the network and senior leaders.

Research participants felt that there needed to be a relationship of openness and trust between the network and other organisational actors. Organisational stakeholders needed to avoid hidden agendas. A lubricant for this included having regular conversations on lived experience and structural inequalities, keeping the dialogue on race equity, and action to improve it, going. As the CouncilCo network chair explained in the quotation below, being constructive supported the development of stronger relationships and action orientated conversations:

"I think it is about the openness in terms of the way the network has been led, so not just myself as the overall chair, but the steering group. And there's been an openness both between us and between the steering group and corporately with the organisation. So we've been able to say we don't think this is a good idea and these are the reasons why. And there's been things that we have absolutely disagreed on". (Network chair, CouncilCo)

6.2.3 Connecting with allies

Network strategies around connecting with allies were also considered to be pivotal in the progress that network's had made. For example a network co-chair in Government Department 1 reflected on positive developments in allyship:

"I think it's just been the willingness of other people to actually get involved, not just people from ethnic minorities, but our White colleagues. Their willingness to listen, to understand, to be talked through things has actually really helped us, especially in the last year. We have 1,500 people signed up to our mailing list. They can't all be from ethnic minorities or faiths. That's simply not possible considering that's half our department". (Network co-chair, Government Department 1)

Enlisting the support of allies spoke to the importance of all members of the organisation taking responsibility for progress on challenging racism and fostering race equity. Reverse or reciprocal mentoring was felt to contribute to the building of allies.

6.2.4 Building confidence in talking about race

Related to relationship building and connecting with allies, building confidence in talking about race was also seen as pivotal to a race networks prospects for changing organisational cultures for the better. This is pertinent to all organisational actors, including network members who are working to promote race equity, as the following quotation illustrates. Here a network member discusses the value of having conversations with fellow network members and race champions in helping to build that confidence:

"I think for me on that point it really built my confidence to just talk in general. But I think I also was a bit nervous about talking about race in a way that was devoid of emotion or in a controlled emotional manner, clearly and concisely. So having that practice through [the race network] and actually having a lot of conversations with both the committee and our [race] champions and just general people helps me work out how I'd like to communicate about race". (Network member, ethnic minority woman, Government Department 1)

6.2.5 Network leadership and resources

Strong network leadership and adequate resourcing of network administration were seen as a further enabler of success in the work of race networks. Network leaders emphasised the value of investing in leadership skills to support network work around organisational

change.

6.2.6 Network succession planning

Succession planning for network leaders of the future was also perceived as key to supporting network sustainability. The following comment from a network chair was typical of sensitivity to the importance of this:

"I think if we don't work on our succession planning and if we don't get the right people in to follow on after us, things may not be so successful". (Network chair, Government Department 1)

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Appendix 1 – The literature review

The research began with a systematic literature review, conducting a search of the main relevant academic databases, including (a) Scopus and (b) the International Bibliography of Social Sciences (ProQuest).

In selecting search terms to guide the gathering of relevant sources, the research team reflected on words and concepts that were directly related to the core research aims and question, with a view to gaining access to appropriate articles, books and reports. Screening was undertaken on the basis of titles, abstracts and key words. Papers were uploaded to Mendeley Reference Manager Software.

The Scopus search included the terms "staff race network" OR "employee network" OR "staff forum" OR "race network" OR "black network" OR "BME network" OR "employee support group" OR "employee resource group". This yielded 234 documents, 92 of which were selected for abstract review, following which 30 were included for full text review.

The International Bibliography of Social Sciences search included the terms (race OR ethnic OR BAME OR BME OR minority OR black) [in document title] AND ("employee network" OR "staff forum" OR "employee resource group" OR "employee support group") [in anywhere]. This yielded 32 results. Abstracts were reviewed and 13 were included for full text review).

A review was also undertaken of grey literature, most fruitful being online search identifying staff race networks with information publicly available on the internet. Grey literature can be helpful in engaging with contemporary developments (e.g. the emergence of staff race networks) that might not be captured in journal articles.

The inclusion criteria of the final sample drawn on in chapter 2 and elsewhere in this report were (i) papers published since 2000; (ii) peer-reviewed empirical papers; (iii) grey literature such as web-based reports (iv) written and published in English with full access; as well as (v) relevant books/book chapters.

Appendix 2 – Staff race network examples (not case studies in this research)

Organisation	Staff race network
Sainsbury's	I AM ME ethnically diverse network (previously BAME network)

Organisation	Staff race network
Tesco	Multicultural Colleague Network (previously) Black Asian Minority Ethnic Network
KPMG	• African and Caribbean Network • China Club • India Club • Jewish Society • Muslim Network • Sikh Network Find out more about KPMG employee networks
Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust	The Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Staff Network
North East London Foundation NHS Trust (NELFT)	Ethnic Minority Network - NELFT
Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust	Ethnically Diverse staff network group
Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network
Cardiff Council	Black and Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff Network
Local Government Association	National Graduate Development Programme BAME network
Leicestershire County Council	The Black, Asian and Multi Ethnic (BAME) Network
Glasgow City Council	Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Network
University of East London	Spectrum
University of Cambridge	Race Equality Network
London School of Economics	EmbRace
Met Office	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network
BBC	Embrace Find out more about uncovering the nuance within 'BAME'
Cross organisational network for pharmacists	The BAME Pharmacists Network
Cross-organisational	Black and Ethnic Minority (B&EMM) support group for UK fire services
Cross-organisational	Race to the Top G6/7 Network
Cross-organisational	The Black Solicitors Network (BSN)
Cross-organisational	Construction BAME Network

Appendix 3 – Case study topic guides

Focus groups for network members: Topic guide

Part A: Participant backgrounds and initial perceptions of the organisation culture, discrimination and disadvantage

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourselves?

Probe:

- Role in organisation
- Length of time in organisation
- How long you've been a member of this network

2. How inclusive of ethnic minorities do you think that [name of employer is]?

Probe as appropriate:

- What would an inclusive organisation look like
- How well are ethnic minority communities represented in the organisation
- How fairly are they treated

Part B: Reasons for joining the (ethnic minority) network

1. Why did you join this network?

Probe as appropriate:

- Any concerns about how fairly treated/inequalities in the workplace
- Any concerns about how ethnic minority colleagues are treated in the workplace
- Any desire to feel less isolated at work
- Any desire to have more voice at work
- Wanting to improve the workplace experiences of ethnic minority staff?
- To help address ethnic inequalities in the workplace
- Other

2. Do you think that there is anything that puts people off of joining the network?

Probe:

- Time
- Too few members
- Don't see the relevance
- Lacks resources
- Lack of influence (e.g does your employer listen to the network, examples...)
- Whether network is welcoming of new members (in any way cliquey?)
- Other

3. How easy do you find it to be an active member of the network?

Probe:

- Barriers to attending meetings
 - Any workload pressures
 - Any issues with line management support
- Any other barriers to engaging in network activities

Part C: Network engagement and factors supporting it

1. How regularly do you engage with the network?

Probe:

- Regularity of meetings
- Ease of regularly attending meetings
- Importance of regular attendance
- Time spent on network activities between meetings

2. How inclusive do you think that the network is?

Probe:

- Whether open to all staff? Eg. lower/higher paid?
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Why? /Why not?
- Importance of inclusive approach
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive; intersectional sensitivity

3. To what extent does your employer support your network engagement?

Probe:

- Whether permits meetings during working hours
- Whether allows all members to attend meetings during working hours
- Whether allows time for members to engage in other network activities during working hours
- Whether provides a budget for the network
- Helping to publicise the network
- Other

4. Can you tell me a little bit about the networks aims?

Probe:

- Support for members
- Engagement with organisational change
- Other
- How aims may have been evolving over time

5. Can you tell me a little bit about what the network has been doing to try to achieve these aims?

Probe:

- Network activities and initiatives
- Raising visibility of ethnic inequalities (how...)
- Organising events (examples)
- Equalities policy development, action plans
- Monitoring outcomes
- Mentoring
- Coalition building
- Other....

6. Do you engage with other staff networks?

Probe:

- Internal/external
- Why? /why not?
- Members of other networks/active engagement?
- How useful is this/ whether it is something that you would like to do?

7. How involved are you with [recognised] trade unions?

Probe as appropriate:

- Membership/active membership
- Why? /why not?
- Perception of whether important for SRN and trade unions to have a good relationship? Do they? To what extent? Collaboration? (examples?)

Part D: Success factors and sustainability in Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks

1. In what ways has your network been successful in your workplace?

Probe:

- In what ways has the network been effective; how can you tell?
 - Growing membership/ stable membership
 - Influence on momentum for organisational change
 - Efforts been made to address issues of over or under-representation (recruitment/progression)
 - Addressing discrimination
 - Improved the visibility of race discrimination at work
 - Increased the degree of conversation about race discrimination at work
 - Increased the voice of lower paid workers
 - Made recruitment processes fairer
 - Made promotion processes fairer
 - Increased the recruitment of ethnic minority staff
 - Improved the representation of ethnic minority staff in supervisory roles
 - Improved the representation of ethnic minority staff in management roles
- Details of what has worked well and what has not
- How can/do you gauge the network's impact?
- Any areas where the network has been less effective?

2. What do you think has been the network's main achievements?

Probe as appropriate:

- In supporting members
- In fostering organisational change (e.g. contributions made by network in addressing ethnic inequalities)

3. Can you say a little bit more about how you have benefited from the network?

Probe:

- Social support
- Information support
- Whether feeling less isolated
- Improvements to scope for career progression
- Other

4. What do you think has unpinned the network's achievements?

Probe:

- Role of network members/ their engagement/commitment
- Way network is structured/organized/run/led
- Support of senior leadership
- Other relationships (e.g. HR, trade unions, line managers, co-workers)
- Commitment of organisational resources
- Other

5. Has the network had to overcome any challenges?

Probe:

- Nature of challenges
- How/extent to which overcome
- Lessons for other networks

6. Has there been turnover in the network's membership?

Probe:

- Reasons for members leaving
- What has been important in maintaining the engagement of network members?

7. To what extent do you think that the network is sustainable?

Probe:

- What is currently important in this?
 - Members themselves
 - Senior manager's
 - Sufficient resources (examples of resource needs)
 - Other
- What may be important in the future? For example succession planning

8. Do you think that there is a business case for the network to exist?

Probe:

- Arguments for the network
- Perception of whether employer sees a business case for it

9. Is there any advice that you would give to other ethnic minority networks to support success?

10. Is there anything that you might have done differently?

11. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

12. How would you like to see the network develop in the future?

Probe:

- Enablers/constraints

Key Informant Interviews: Topic guide - network chairs

Part A: Background on network chair

1. Can you tell me a bit about your role & responsibilities as the chair of the [insert network name]?

Probe:

- Length of time in role
- Responsibilities
- Other roles/responsibilities in the organisation (briefly)

2. Why did you become a network chair?

Probe:

- Pros and cons
- How challenging a role is it

Part B: Network history, organisation and aims

1. Can you tell me about why and how the [insert name of SRN] was initiated?

Probe:

- Any role of ethnic minority staff
- Any role of HR
- Any role of Senior management/ Diversity Champions
- Any role of trade unions
- Other input
- When network began

2. Were there any challenges encountered in getting started?

Probe:

- What helped in overcoming the challenges

3. How was the network's name decided upon?

Probe:

- Why network called what it is; does the name matter
- Any discussion/debate about the name; why/why not

4. Can you tell me a bit about how the network is organised?

Probe:

- Formal organisation, e.g. committee, where there is a core team
- Whether/how this formality is important.
- Informal organisation
- Whether/how this informality is important

5. How many network members do you currently have?

Probe:

- How has this been changing over time
- Reasons for changes/stability in membership

6. To what extent is the network open to all ethnic minority staff?

Probe:

- Lower/higher paid workers
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Does it matter? Why? /Why not?
- Whether inclusivity has changed over time
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive

7. Would you describe the network as having strategic aims?

Probe:

- How would you describe the networks strategy? Priorities
- Has this evolved over time? How? Why?
- Has anything in particular supported a more strategic approach?

8. What do you see as the purpose of the network?

Probe:

- Social/ information support for ethnic minority groups
- Making ethnic minority experiences more visible
- Supporting organisation change/ addressing inequalities (recruitment/progression)
- Involvement in equality/race action plans

- Monitoring progress
- Whether/how role has evolved over time
- Whether seen as a form of positive action

Part B: SRNs and organisational relationships

With human resources/equality and diversity managers

1. How closely does the network work with HR/ equality and diversity managers?

Probe:

- Involvement in committees/ working groups
- Policy input (e.g. engaging with recruitment and progression)
- Degree of support from HR

2. Do you receive any resources to support the day-to-day operation of the network?

Probe:

- Any resources provided/ nature of support
- Time off for members to attend network meetings
- Time off to engage in other network activities
- Funding for activities
- Training/capacity building
- Ease of accessing support

3. What kind of issues do management discuss with the network? Recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff

Probe:

- Recruitment of ethnic minority staff
- Pay (gaps)
- Reporting of race discrimination
- Handling of complaints about race discrimination
- Other

With senior managers

4. To what extent is the network supported by senior management?

Probe:

- In what ways? Are there any tangible signs of support?
- How important is this in meeting the network aims?

5. Do you think that managers perceive a business case for supporting the network?

Probe:

- Nature of any business case
- Degree to which this is important
- Whether network has needed to make a business case

With line managers

6. To what extent do you think that line managers are supportive of network members and their activities?

Probe:

- Allowing network members to engage with network activities in working time

With trade unions

7. To what extent does the network have contact with trade unions?

Probe:

- Quality of relationship
- Degree to which collaborate (examples)
- Any conflict (examples)
- What has helped to avoid/minimise conflict

8. How would you say that the role of the network and the role of the trade union(s) compare?

Probe:

- Engagement with experiences/concerns of ethnic minority staff
- Engagement with race equality
- Engagement with development and implementation of diversity policies, e.g. race equality action plans
- Other

With other staff networks

9. To what extent do you have any contact with other Staff Networks?

Probe:

- In this organisation? In other organisations?
- Any impetus for contact/collaboration
- Why? Why not? Does this matter?

Part D: Success factors and sustainability in Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks

13. How successful do you feel that the [SEN] is?

Probe:

- In what ways has the network been effective; how can you tell?
 - Growing membership
 - Stable membership
 - Influence on momentum for organisational change
 - Efforts been made to address issues of over or under-representation (recruitment/progression)
 - Addressing discrimination
- Details of what has worked well and what has not
- How can/do you gauge the network's impact?
- Any areas where the network has been less effective?

14. What do you think has been the network's main achievements?

Probe as appropriate:

- In supporting members
- In fostering organisational change (e.g. contributions made by network in addressing ethnic inequalities)

15. What do you think has unpinned the network's achievements?

Probe:

- Role of network members/ their engagement/commitment
- Way network is structured/organised
- Support of senior leadership
- Other relationships (e.g. HR, trade unions, line managers, co-workers)
- Commitment of organisational resources
- Other

16. Has the network had to overcome any challenges?

Probe:

- Nature of challenges
- How/extent to which overcome
- Lessons for other networks

17. Has there been turnover in the network's membership?

Probe:

- Reasons for members leaving
- What has been important in maintaining the engagement of network members?

18. To what extent do you think that the network is sustainable?

Probe:

- What is currently important in this?
- What may be important in the future? For example succession planning

19. Is there any advice that you would give to other ethnic minority networks to support success?

20. Is there anything that you might have done differently?

21. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Key Informant Interviews: Topic guide - diversity managers

Part A: Background on respondent and organisation

Respondent's profile

1. Can you tell me a bit about your role & responsibilities?

Probe:

- Length of time in current job
- Responsibilities

Organisation background

2. Can you tell me a bit about your organisation?

Probe:

- Nature of organisation/business:
- Workforce size: full/part-time & permanent/temporary; how has this been changing (eg. downsizing, outsourcing/ supply chains); reasons for outsourcing jobs.
- Whether recruitment/downsizing is occurring? At which levels?
- Union recognition: Are trade unions recognised? Which trade unions? Representing which sections of the workforce? For collective bargaining purposes?

Ethnic and gender diversity

3. Are particular minority ethnic groups more or less represented in your workforce?

Probe:

- Does the ethnic composition of your workforce worry you in any way?
- Why/ why not? Targets
- Parity of representation of local communities in workforce
- Ethnic diversity in different types of jobs (lower/higher paid)
- How, if at all, have these patterns changed in the last 5 years or so?
- Gender and ethnic representation in management (probe ethnic minority men and women)

Part B: Diversity policies

1. Do you have a formal equal opportunities or managing diversity policy that addresses equality of treatment and unfair discrimination? (ask for copies of relevant documentation)

2. What support do you receive in implementing diversity and equal opportunity practices and approaches as a HR manager?

Probe:

- Main sources of information and guidance on equalities policies and practice in general
- Main sources of information and guidance on Staff Networks in particular, Eg. Acas, CIPD, employer networks

3. (Where unions are recognized) Have trade unions been involved in the development and implementation of diversity policies?

Probe:

- How? Why? How important is any union involvement? Whether equality bargaining takes place? Any role for union equality reps?
- [If asked, definition of equality bargaining: Inclusion of issues of particular concern to women; Equality awareness in handling bargaining agenda; equality dimension to negotiation of change]

4. Do you have any action plans for race equality?

Probe:

- How long have these plans been in place
- Key priorities? How if at all have these been changing.
- Why?
- Engaging with recruitment? Progression? Other?

Part C: Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks – background and role

1. Can you tell me about the range of Staff Networks that you have in this organisation?

Probe:

- Which group/social identities have a Staff Network, e.g. women, ethnic minorities, faith communities
- How long have they been running?
- Whether fluctuated in activity over time, why/ why not.

2. Can you tell me about how the [insert name of SRN] was initiated?

Probe:

- Any role of HR
- Any role of Senior management/ Diversity Champions
- Any role of ethnic minority staff
- Any role of trade unions
- Other input

3. What do you see as the purpose of the network?

Probe:

- Social/ information support for ethnic minority groups
- Making ethnic minority experiences more visible
- Supporting organisation change/ addressing inequalities
- Involvement in equality/race action plans
- Monitoring
- Whether/how role has evolved over time
- Whether seen as a form of positive action
- How do the network and trade union roles compare

4. What sorts of barriers do you think people from ethnic minority groups face progressing from lower paid to higher paid employment?

Probe:

- Does this happen in this workplace? Examples
- Has the SEN been able to support engagement with these barriers? Why? How?

5. To what extent do you think that there is a business case for having a [SRN]? (If necessary, explain that the business case focuses on the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce for organisational efficiency and market performance)

6. Do you provide resources to the network?

Probe:

- Why/why not/ Enablers and constraints
- Resources provided/ nature of support
 - Time off for network meetings, network activities
 - Funding for activities
 - Training

7. Are line managers supportive of ethnic minority staff engaging in SEN activity?

8. What kind of issues do management discuss with the network?

Probe:

- Recruitment of ethnic minority staff
- Pay (gaps)
- Reporting of race discrimination
- Handling of complaints about race discrimination
- Other

Part D: Success factors in Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks

22. How inclusive do you think that the network is?

Probe:

- Whether open to all staff? Eg. lower/higher paid?
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Why? /Why not?
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive.

23. How successful do you feel that the network is?

Probe:

- Why has/ has not been effective; how can you tell?
 - Growing membership
 - Stable membership
 - Influence on momentum for organisational change
 - Efforts been made to address issues of over or under-representation (recruitment/progression)
 - Addressing discrimination
- Details of what has worked well and what has not
- How can/do you gauge its impact?

24. What do you think has been the network's main achievements?

25. What do you think has driven the network's achievements?

Probe:

- Role of network members

- Way network is structured/organised
- Support of senior leadership
- Commitment of organisational resources
- Other

26. Has the network had to overcome any challenges?

Probe:

- Nature of challenges
- How/extent to which overcome

27. To what extent do you think that the network is sustainable?

Probe:

- What is currently important in this?
- What may be important in the future? For example succession planning

28. Is there any advice that you would give to other organisations to help them build successful ethnic minority networks?

29. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Key Informant Interviews: Topic guide – Senior managers and race champions

Part A: Background on respondent and organisation

Respondent's profile

1. Can you tell me a bit about your role & responsibilities?

Probe:

- Length of time in current job
- Responsibilities
- Previous roles (briefly)

Organisation background

4. Can you tell me a bit about your organisation?

Probe as appropriate (some of this background may have been provided by other interviewees):

- Nature of organisation/business
- Workforce size: full/part-time & permanent/temporary; how has this been changing (eg. growing, downsizing, more or less emphasis on outsourcing/ supply chains); reasons for outsourcing jobs.
- Whether recruitment is occurring? At which levels?
- Union recognition: Are trade unions recognised? Which trade unions? Representing which sections of the workforce? For collective bargaining purposes?

Ethnic and gender diversity

5. Are particular minority ethnic groups more or less represented in your workforce?

Probe as appropriate (some of this background may have been provided by other interviewees):

- Does the ethnic composition of your workforce worry you in any way?
- Why/ why not? Targets
- Parity of representation of local communities in workforce
- Geographical areas of deprivation/disadvantage; recruitment of staff/minority staff from these areas
- Ethnic diversity in different types of jobs (lower/higher paid)
- How, if at all, have these patterns changed in the last 5 years or so?
- Gender and ethnic representation in management (probe ethnic minority men and women)

Part B: Senior manager/network champion engagement with the network

1. Have you supported the [SRN] in any way?

Probe:

- Any role in initiating the network (what happened; enablers/constraints)
- Perception of role of other stakeholders (e.g. HR ethnic minority staff, trade unions)
- Other senior management/champion input/ role in championing the network (examples of how/activities), e.g.
 - Raising awareness/promote benefits of diversity more widely in organisation
 - Giving credibility to diversity management policies
 - Demonstrate management 'buy-in' to equality
 - Engaging with network members/meetings
 - Listening to network member concerns
 - Facilitating network resource needs
 - Other

2. Can you tell me about why you have supported the network in this way?

Probe:

- Personal interest (e.g from an ethnic minority background themselves; intersectional interests)
- Self-selected
- Other

3. What kind of issues do you discuss with the network?

Probe as appropriate:

- Recruitment of ethnic minority staff
- Pay (gaps)
- Reporting of race discrimination
- Handling of complaints about race discrimination
- Other

Part C: Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks – background and role

1. Can you tell me about the range of Staff Networks that you have in this organisation?

Probe:

- Which group/social identities have a Staff Network, e.g. women, ethnic
- minorities, faith communities
- How long have they been running?
- Whether fluctuated in activity over time, why/ why not.

2. What do you see as the purpose of the SRN?

Probe:

- Social/ information support for ethnic minority groups
- Making ethnic minority experiences more visible
- Supporting organisation change/ addressing inequalities
- Involvement in equality/race action plans
- Monitoring
- Whether/how role has evolved over time
- Whether seen as a form of positive action
- How do the network and trade union roles compare

3. What sorts of barriers do you think people from ethnic minority groups face progressing from lower paid to higher paid employment?

Probe:

- Does this happen in this workplace? Examples
- Has the SEN been able to support engagement with these barriers? Why? How?

4. To what extent do you think that there is a business case for having a [SRN]? (If necessary, explain that the business case focuses on the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce for organisational efficiency and market performance)

5. Can you tell me a little more about any resources that you provide to the network?

Probe:

- Why/why not/ Enablers and constraints
- Resources provided/ nature of support
 - Time off for network meetings, network activities
 - Funding for activities
 - Training

6. Are line managers supportive of ethnic minority staff engaging in SEN activity?

Part D: SRN and trade union relationship

1. (Where unions are recognized) Have trade unions been involved in the development and implementation of diversity policies?

Probe as appropriate:

- How? Why? How important is any union involvement? Whether equality bargaining takes place? Any role for union equality reps?
- [If asked, definition of equality bargaining: Inclusion of issues of particular concern to women; Equality awareness in handling bargaining agenda; equality dimension to negotiation of change]

2. How would you say that the role of the network and the role of the union compare?

Probe:

- Engagement with experiences/concerns of ethnic minority staff
- Engagement with race equality
- Engagement with development and implementation of diversity policies, e.g. race equality action plans
- Other

3. To what extent do you have contact with other Staff Networks?

Probe:

- Any impetus for contact/collaboration
- Why? Why not? Does this matter?
- Is it similar or different to the contact and engagement with SRNs?

Part E: Perceptions of success factors in Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks

30. How inclusive do you think that the network is?

Probe:

- Whether open to all staff? Eg. lower/higher paid?
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Why? /Why not?
- Importance of inclusive approach
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive.

31. How successful do you feel that the network is?

Probe:

- Why has/ has not been effective; how can you tell?
 - Growing membership
 - Stable membership
 - Influence on momentum for organisational change
 - Efforts been made to address issues of over or under-representation (recruitment/progression)
 - Addressing discrimination
- Details of what has worked well and what has not
- How can/do you gauge its impact?

32. What do you think has been the network's main achievements?

33. What do you think has driven the network's achievements?

Probe:

- Role of network members
- Way network is structured/organised
- Support of senior leadership
- Commitment of organisational resources
- Other

34. Has the network had to overcome any challenges?

Probe:

- Nature of challenges
- How/extent to which overcome

35. To what extent do you think that the network is sustainable?

Probe:

- What is currently important in this?
- What may be important in the future? For example succession planning

36. Is there any advice that you would give to other organisations to help them build successful ethnic minority networks?

37. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Key Informant Interviews: Topic guide – Trade unions

Part A: Background on Trade Union representative and the union

Respondent's profile

1. Can you tell me a bit about your role & responsibilities in the union?

Probe:

- Member of which trade union
- Length of time in current role
- Responsibilities
- Previous roles (briefly)

Union background

6. Can you tell me a bit about your union?

Probe:

- Which section of workers represented?
- What is the union recognised for - collective bargaining purposes?
- Gender and ethnic representation in union
- What is the percentage of ethnic minorities in the union?

Ethnic and gender diversity in the union

7. Are particular minority ethnic groups more or less represented in the union?

Probe:

- How, if at all, have patterns of representation of ethnic minority groups changed in the last 5 years or so?
- Parity of representation of local communities in workforce
- Geographical areas of deprivation/disadvantage; recruitment of staff/minority staff from these areas
- Ethnic diversity in different types of jobs (lower/higher paid)

- Does the ethnic composition of your workforce and union membership worry you in any way?
- Why/ why not?

4. How regularly do they engage with the union?

Probe:

- How, if at all, have patterns of participation of ethnic minority groups changed in the last 5 years or so?
- Reasons for level of engagement - any challenges?

5. What is the nature of issues/concerns raised by ethnic minority groups?

Probe:

- Recruitment/progression of ethnic minority staff
- Representation
- Pay (gaps)
- Harassment, bullying, unconscious bias, micro-aggression
- Race discrimination
- Handling of complaints about race discrimination and above
- Other

6. To what extent do you think union is able to address their concerns?

Probe:

- Experiences/concerns of ethnic minority staff
- Address race inequality and other concerns
- Other

Part B: Union's understanding of the nature and role of SRNs

7. Can you tell me about why and how the [insert name of SRN] was initiated?

Probe:

- When network began
- Any role of trade unions – is the network within the union or separate?
- Any role of ethnic minority staff
- Any role of HR
- Any role of Senior management/ Diversity Champions
- Other input

8. Can you tell me a bit about how the network is organised?

Probe:

- Formal organisation, e.g. committee
- Whether/how this formality is important.
- Informal organisation
- Whether/how this informality is important.

9. How would you describe the network's role and aims?

Probe:

- How would you describe the networks strategy? Priorities
- Has this evolved over time? How? Why?
- Has anything in particular supported the network's approach?

10. What do you see as the purpose of the network?

Probe:

- Social/ information support for ethnic minority groups
- Making ethnic minority experiences more visible
- Supporting organisation change/ addressing inequalities (recruitment/progression)
- Involvement in equality/race action plans
- Monitoring progress
- Whether/how role has evolved over time
- Whether seen as a form of positive action

11. To what extent is the network open?

Probe:

- Lower/higher paid workers
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Does it matter? Why? /Why not?
- Whether inclusivity has changed over time
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive.

12. How inclusive do you think that the network is?

Probe:

- Whether open to all staff? Eg. lower/higher paid?
- All ethnic minority staff? Ethnic minority men and women?
- Full-time/part-time staff
- Temporary/permanent staff
- Outsourced workers
- Why? /Why not?
- Perceptions of any enablers of inclusion; barriers to being inclusive.

13. What do you think is the nature of relationship between management and the [SRN]?

Probe:

- Support by senior management
- Involvement in committees, working groups on equality and diversity
- Policy input (e.g. engaging with recruitment and progression)
- Degree of support from HR.
- Funding/resources/training provided

Part C: SRNs and Union relationship

14. To what extent does the union have contact with network?

Probe:

- Quality of relationship
- Degree to which collaborate (examples)
- Any conflict (examples)
- What has helped to avoid/minimize conflict

15. How many network members are union members and/or representatives?

Probe:

- How has this been changing over time
- Reasons for changes/stability in membership and/or leadership

16. How would you say that the role of the network and the role of the union compare?

Probe:

- Engagement with experiences/concerns of ethnic minority staff
- Engagement with race equality
- Engagement with development and implementation of diversity policies, e.g. race equality action plans
- Other

17. To what extent do you have contact with other Staff Networks?

Probe:

- Any impetus for contact/collaboration
- Why? Why not? Does this matter?
- Is it similar or different to the contact and engagement with SRNs?

Part D: Union's understanding of Success, Challenges and sustainability of Staff (Ethnic Minority) Networks

18. To what extent do you think the SRN has been successful/or not in addressing concerns/issues of ethnic minority groups?

Probe:

- In supporting members
- In addressing ethnic inequalities, discrimination

19. What do you think have been the reasons for the success of SRN?

Probe:

- Support of senior management
- Other relationships (e.g. HR, trade unions, line managers, co-workers)
- Commitment of organisational resources
- Other

20. What do think are the challenges faced by the SRN?

Probe:

- Nature of challenges
- How/extent to which overcome

21. To what extent do you think that the network is sustainable?

Probe:

- What is currently important in this?
- What may be important in the future?

22. Is there anything that you think the union may do to support the SRN aims?

23. Is there anything else that you would like to add?