Bystander guidance

for dealing with a racist incident

University Hospitals Dorset
NHS Foundation Trust

NHS

We are inclusive

At UHD we are committed to creating a work environment where everyone can flourish and no one is subjected to racism or discrimination.

> "As the trust board of University Hospital Dorset, we affirm that the trust is an open, non-judgemental and inclusive organisation that will not tolerate racism or discrimination. We celebrate the diversity of our staff and community. We will treat all our staff with dignity and respect, irrespective of their race, gender, religion, age disability or sexual orientation."
>
> **Statement from the UHD board of directors**

A **bystander** is a person who is present when something happens and who sees it but does not take part in it. – *Cambridge Dictionary*

We are bystanders every day in many different situations. **We all have the power to make a difference** in a way that positively impacts others, no matter our role or position within UHD.

At times, events around us might make us feel uncomfortable or we might witness discrimination or abuse. When this happens, we can choose to say or do something, be an active bystander, or to simply let it go and remain a passive bystander.

When we intervene and act, we signal to the instigator and any observers that their actions are **unacceptable**, and if such messages are constantly **reinforced** within our organisation, we can shift the boundaries of what is considered **acceptable behaviour**.

Intervention might be as simple as choosing **not to laugh** at a 'joke' that is racist or undermines someone, **challenging** a Facebook post or **offering support** to friends after an incident you observed.

Being an active bystander also includes **checking in on colleagues** and knowing how to signpost to support and to the appropriate UHD policies.

By doing these things you will be role modelling being an '[anti-racist](#)' within our organisation.

What is racism?

Racism is being treated differently by someone because of **skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, language or accent**. Racism causes harm and distress to the victim and can take many forms such as:

- **Demeaning or insulting verbal or non-verbal behaviour** from colleagues or patients relating to ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.
- **Calling someone by a demeaning or insulting name** based on ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.

- **Threatened or actual physical assault** motivated by ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.
- **Offensive or derogatory language** relating to ethnicity, race, colour or nationality. This can be written or spoken.
- **Deliberate isolation** of someone at work or non-cooperation on the grounds of ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.
- **Online abuse by text, message or email** relating to ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.
- **Patients refusing to be treated** by someone based on their ethnicity, race, colour or nationality.
- **Use of racist gestures** including hand gestures.

Important points to note

You are not expected to be an expert on racism or other types of abuse. At UHD we are encouraging everyone to take ownership by supporting colleagues and creating a more positive work environment for all. There are many ways to do this, both directly and indirectly.

This guidance is here to provide you with information on available support contacts and details on how to report incidents.

You are reminded to **always keep yourself safe** and to escalate as per our UHD Violence Prevention and Reduction Policy.

When to be an active bystander

Unacceptable behaviour may be overt and direct, or subtle and more hidden. It can take the form of individual incidents or on-going behaviour. You may observe a one-off comment which is unacceptable or multiple incidents of seemingly minor 'micro-aggressions' which have a significant impact upon an individual's confidence and ability to work safely.

Safely supporting: Only intervene directly if it is safe to do so

Each incident is different and there are many different approaches you can take to being a supportive active bystander:

- Take **direct action** by saying something
  or
- **Distract** away from the situation
  or
- **Ask** someone else to step in
  or
- **Delay** saying something until you feel it is **safe** to do so

The important point is that you **have noted the inappropriate behaviour** and **provided support to the individual impacted**.

During the incident

Remain calm

Ask yourself:

- Are you physically and psychologically safe?
- Is the person being abused physically safe?
- Does it seem unlikely that the situation will escalate?

Direct intervention is **only the correct response** if you can answer **yes** to all these questions. The next steps are to:

Call out inappropriate behaviour. Tell the person to stop by saying *"that's not OK"* or *"I don't like that"* or *"I'm not sure if you understand how that is coming across".*

Don't aggravate the situation. Remain calm and state why something has offended you. Stick to exactly what has happened. Don't exaggerate. Be polite.

Call security on ext. 2222 if the situation is escalating or individuals are threatening violence. Use the ward emergency call button if required.

Distract to de-escalate the situation

- Interrupt the person and move the conversation onto another topic.
- Create a diversion by coming up with an idea to remove the individual from the situation. Tell them they need to take a call, or you need to speak to them privately.

Disengage

When we are emotionally impacted, we can sometimes say things in the heat of the moment that perhaps we don't mean. This may inflame the situation.

In these circumstances, it is perfectly acceptable to take a breath, step back, and disengage.

Check-in

- Ask the recipient of the behaviour if they are OK or if they need support.
- Check in with them later.
- If appropriate and a genuine mistake, you may want to also check-in with the instigator as a compassionate team colleague.

After the incident

If the situation **does not feel safe** to address at the time or if you feel outnumbered, walk away. Wait for the situation to pass.

Delay the conversation

You may prefer to speak to the instigator at a later date in private**.**

The **B**ehaviour, **E**ffect, **E**xpectation, **R**esult (B.E.E.R) feedback model can be useful to help structure an informal conversation.

Example:

"I observed this comment or **behaviour** [enter incident]. I am not sure what your intention was at the time, however this is the **effect** that your comment / behaviour had on the other person [insert why I and others may find it offensive or demeaning]."

Outline the **expectation** and what **result** you would like:

"Please could you stop that behaviour / action?"

"Please could you do this differently?"

"Most people I know don't think it's OK to…."

"People just don't say that kind of thing anymore…"

"It would be helpful to everyone if you did not engage in this behaviour in the future"

"This may not have been your intention, however, it is important that you understand the impact"

The instigator of the behaviour may want to understand more information or be guided on how to handle the situation differently in the future. Our 'Anti-racism toolkit' can help them with this.

Ask someone else to step in

If you are too embarrassed or shy to speak out, or you don't feel safe to do so, get someone else to step in. Inform a colleague, your manager, a Freedom to Speak Up guardian, or a staff network lead. Then report the incident via the pink 'raise an issue' LERN form.

Check-in

Check in with the individual. Even if they say they are fine, acknowledge the situation wasn't OK and offer support/signpost to support if they want it.

Reporting concerns or incidents

UHD take any reports of harassment or discrimination very seriously. Report a racist incident via the pink 'raise an issue' LERN form.

Signposting to support

There are many people who can give you support and guidance on next steps:

- Your/their line manager
- A trusted colleague or friend
- Freedom to Speak Up team
- Diverse Ethnicity Network
- HR
- Psychological Support and Counselling Service (self-referral for wellbeing support)
- Occupational health

You can find this support and more on our Thrive wellbeing intranet pages.

Hints and tips for intervening safely

There are several approaches that may be helpful:

1. **Use 'I' Statements** (Change the focus to yourself):

   - State your feelings
   - Name the behaviour
   - State how you want the person to respond. This avoids criticising the other person, for example:

   "I don't like racist jokes. Please don't make them anymore."
   "I didn't like what you said about those women. Don't say that anymore."

2. ***Body language/lack of engagement:***

   You don't have to speak to communicate. Sometimes a disapproving look or not laughing/smiling at a 'joke' can be far more powerful than words.

3. Use social norms:

Identify that this is not usual or accepted behaviour. For example:

"*Most people I know don't think it's OK to….*" or "*People just don't say that kind of thing anymore…*"

4. Widen their lens of understanding:

Engage empathy in the person behaving inappropriately. For example:

"*How would you feel if someone did that to you/your sister/your daughter?*" or "*I wonder if you realise how that comes across?*"

5. Use your relationship to influence change

Reframe the intervention. For example:

"*Alex, as your friend, I've got to tell you that lots of people don't like your jokes about XYZ; it annoys them*"
"*I know that you would not want to offend someone but using that word is not great'.*

In summary

Know your limits as an active bystander and engage others as necessary or if you do not feel confident about doing it by yourself.

Conduct conversations in a **safe environment** for you and the person you are speaking to.

If you are unable to support the individual, **seek help** from someone and **report the incident**.

Understanding racism: Self-development resources

Videos:

- **UHD See Me First launch** – Siobhan Harrington

- **Inclusion starts with I** – a video highlighting how our differences can make us feel excluded and/or misunderstood – Accenture

- **What's it like being a member of staff from an ethnic minority background in the NHS?** – Kings Fund

- **BAME Video 2019** – UHD Diverse Ethnicity Network

- **What is White Privilege?** – Psychologist John Amaechi explains the implications of white privilege – BBC Bitesize

- **Unconscious Bias** – an overview of the key concepts

- **Bias in healthcare** – learn how implicit bias can affect treatment decisions

- **Microaggressions** – an overview of the impact of microaggressions

- **The Importance of Empathy** – a video on the science of empathy and understand how others experience the world – Life Hacker

- **Non-racist vs anti-racist** – Jon Amaechi also explains the differences – BBC Bitesize