Race equality week, what is it and how can you get involved?

[et_pb_section fb_built="1" _builder_version="3.0.100" background_image="http://davidk423.sg-host.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/bdbf_final-stages-1-4-1.jpg" custom_padding="|||" global_module="2165" saved_tabs="all"][et_pb_row _builder_version="3.25" custom_padding="|||"][et_pb_column type="4_4" _builder_version="3.25" custom_padding="|||" custom_padding__hover="|||"][et_pb_text _builder_version="3.27.4" background_layout="dark" custom_margin="0px|||" custom_padding="0px|||"]

Employment Law News

[/et_pb_text][/et_pb_column][/et_pb_row][/et_pb_section][et_pb_section fb_built="1" admin_label="section" _builder_version="3.22.3"][et_pb_row admin_label="row" _builder_version="3.25" background_size="initial" background_position="top_left" background_repeat="repeat"][et_pb_column type="4_4" _builder_version="3.25" custom_padding="|||" custom_padding__hover="|||"][et_pb_text _builder_version="4.7.4" text_orientation="justified" use_border_color="off"]

Race equality week, what is it and how can you get involved?

Did you know that we are in the middle of the UK's first ever Race Equality Week? The week runs from 1 to 7 February 2021 and aims to bring UK employers, organisations and the wider public together to address issues affecting ethnic minority

employees with the aim of igniting real change.

The Race Equality Network launched the initiative against the backdrop of the world-changing events that took place in 2020, namely the Black Lives Matter movement and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on ethnic minorities. These events generated a new level of public consciousness of race inequality on our doorstep in the UK.

The Race Equality Network have multiple events on this week and have highlighted on their website the ways for organisations and individuals to get involved by taking part in one or more of their three key initiatives – The Virtual Badge Campaign, Safe Space and The Big Promise.

The theme of this year's Race Equality Week

The theme of this year's Race Equality Week is "Transparency, Accountability, Action" which is already a hot topic across many different sectors. The ambition for the week is "let's not go back to normal". An interesting point as prior to 2020, 75% of ethnic minorities experienced racism in the workplace. The week's ambition is that we take what we have learnt from 2020 and use that to drive change.

In addition, lack of representation continues to be an issue. Figures published by Business in the Community have shown that despite making up over 3% of the population of England and Wales, black people held just 1.5% of the 3.7 million director and manager level roles across the public and private sectors in 2019. This is only a 0.1% increase since the last Race at the Top report in 2014.

What can employers do?

Beyond getting involved in the Race Equality Week initiative and events, employers should consider the measures set out in the Race at Work charter devised by Business in the Community. The charter contains five calls to action to

ensure that ethnic minority employees are represented at all levels in an organisation:

1. **Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race:** this should assist to provide visible leadership and drive key decisions. this approach has been adopted with some success in the context of improving gender equality within the workplace. For example, annual gender pay gap reports must be signed off by a director or equivalent within the business, and many reports now open with a statement by that person, outlining the company's values and progress in that arena.

2. **Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress:** gathering ethnicity data from the employee population is essential to be able to monitor and report progress over time. This data will also be necessary if, and when, businesses are required to report on their ethnicity pay. However, there are many hurdles around collecting, analysing and reporting ethnicity data. For example, employees are not legally obliged to disclose their ethnicity to their employer and research shows that self-declaration can be as low as 50%, meaning data sets will be incomplete. Employers need to think carefully how they can encourage self-declaration (e.g. by demonstrating that the data will be kept secure) and ensure that it is collected at different points (e.g. at the recruitment stage and then again at the onboarding stage) and at regular enough intervals to enable progress to be monitored effectively.

3. **Commit at Board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying:** a recent survey revealed that 25% of ethnic minority employees reported that they had witnessed or experienced racial harassment or bullying from managers. Board level commitment should be secured to stamp this out. In addition, appropriate training should be delivered across the workforce, clear policies

must be put in place and a consistent approach taken towards any offending behaviour.

4. **Make clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers:** for example, performance objectives could be tied to such responsibilities. Again, this is something we have seen used to good effect in gender equality arena. For example, senior executives at TSB had their bonuses cut for failing to meet gender equality targets.

5. **Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression:** taking positive action has the potential to make the biggest impact on representation rates. Many employers will have embraced (or be prepared to embrace) positive action pre-recruitment, for example, deploying targeted advertising, outreach work and offering mentoring, training and networking opportunities. However, few employers within the private sector will have used positive action at the point of recruitment, largely for fear of "reverse discrimination" claims. BDBF have published a detailed paperand presentation on Positive Action in the Workplace, which aims to demystify this area of the law.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this article or how BDBF can help your business navigate race at work issues, then please contact Hannah Lynn (hannahlynn@bdbdf.co.uk), Amanda Steadman (amandasteadman@bdbf.co.uk) or your usual BDBF contact.

[/et_pb_text][/et_pb_column][/et_pb_row][/et_pb_section][et_pb_section fb_built="1" _builder_version="3.26.6"][et_pb_row _builder_version="3.26.6"][et_pb_column type="4_4" _builder_version="3.26.6"][/et_pb_column][/et_pb_row][/et_pb_s

ection]