

**ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH PRINCIPAL
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS**
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ASPEP Anti-Racism Position Paper

ASPEP wrote this position paper with contributions from members of the SDEP Anti-Racist national network. It was felt that a position paper, which endorses a consideration of our roles and functions, as outlined in the Currie Review, through an anti-racist lens would be a progressive step for the profession.

Anti-racism is not just conceptual, it is rooted in action. It is about taking steps to eliminate racism at the individual, institutional and structural level. ASPEP and the SDEP are committed to supporting this work through training, policy development and promoting understanding for Scottish Educational Psychology Service leaders.

Purpose of Anti-Racism Position Paper

Educational Psychology in Scotland has recently been considering the lack of diversity, specifically with reference to EPs of colour, within the profession. In addition, consideration is being given to the impact that this context has on those people of colour who are already practising Educational Psychologists (EPs) or Trainee Educational Psychologists and ultimately on the stakeholders in receipt of the service EPs provide.

To make progress there is a need to 'decolonise' the profession. Decolonisation of the profession means that EPs must challenge some of the racist assumptions which exist beneath the psychological theories and structures utilised in Educational Psychology. Frosh (2012) and Patel et al (2023) highlight the colonial legacies within Educational Psychology in relation to past (e.g. eugenics) and present (e.g. attachment) theories.

Psychologists also need to challenge themselves and ensure that any biases that may exist are reflected upon honestly and with integrity. In addition, the profession needs to build the skills of anti-racism so that we can fully support the families and young people that EPs work with and EPs of colour, as well as understanding the limitations around the research, assessment and interventions that underpin the work of Educational Psychology. This may mean updating policies and advice on assessment etc. that do not include understanding of the cultural context that young people and their families live in. It is important that any experiences of racism, or racial trauma are considered in relation to the assessment information and the intervention supports.

ASPEP has worked closely with the SDEP on Anti-Racism and fully supports the need for a position paper, which outlines how the profession shapes itself in accordance with the values of equity and diversity. ASPEP recognises that racism and structural racism exist and that there is a requirement for EPs to understand how we mitigate this for EPs of colour and stakeholders of colour to reduce the emotional and psychological burden this creates.

There is a recognised gap in the tracking and monitoring of race and ethnicity data within Educational Psychology in Scotland. To promote and enhance diversity within the profession, the SDEP Anti-Racism Steering Group will consider how to capture workforce planning data to track this aspect of the profession. Through systematic analysis of data, ASPEP will support

the profession and EPS to promote and enhance diversity with the aim of developing targeted strategies to increase inclusivity within the profession.

Personal and Professional Development

In line with the guidance from the BPS and HCPC, Psychologists are required to adhere to the Equality Act (2010). The HCPC, as regulatory body for Educational Psychologists, notes specifically the need to go 'beyond our legal obligations'. The HCPC posits that bias and inequity exist for stakeholders, and they wish to ensure that HCPC registrants are equipped to challenge these biases as well as to avoid perpetrating them. The BPS states the importance of training for all members in equity, diversity and inclusion. In addition, there needs to be the development of a strong evidence base for resources that promote equity in addition to the creation of a culture in psychology that encourages a wider representation of society in its workforce.

Understanding that racism is not limited to an explicit racial slur is also important for the profession. Many of the micro-aggressions which make up the wider experience of racism e.g. mispronouncing names, not making eye contact with people of colour; reducing cultures to simplistic stereotypes or tropes etc., need to be conceptualised as a form of aggression in themselves. These situations and behaviours require challenge both at individual and systemic levels.

As part of the development of EP racial literacy i.e. developing an understanding of the issues that underpin racism, a knowledge of the impact of micro-aggressions and the importance of the lived experience is crucial. This in turn will give an insight into what stakeholders feel when their perspectives are dismissed, or indeed, what our EP colleagues of colour feel when their own experiences of racism are misunderstood or not acknowledged as racism.

Lived Experiences

Whilst a core part of what EPs do is capturing the voice of the young person, there is still a lack of voice from young people of colour in EP work and research. Although we recognise that voices of children and young people of colour should be accessed with caution to ensure we do not cause further racial harmⁱ, when these voices are recorded and used, rather than quietened, it can elicit 'transformation' in our understanding of the experience of those who are often not part of the mainstream (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). We can also apply this to EPs of colour who experience the job and the systems through a different lens. It is the responsibility of ASPEP, in conjunction with our SDEP colleagues and the profession as a whole, to capture these on a regular basis. Consideration of how to do this would need to be agreed by ASPEP and the SDEP. This feedback will help the profession to understand the experience of being part of and receiving services from EPS across Scotland and support reviews of practice.

Principles of Practice

Developing a position paper will help establish the groundwork and rationale to undertake a review of previous position papers and ensure that they are regarded through the lens of anti-racism. For example, position papers such as the ASPEP Assessment paper or the Nurture paper may need to have additional aspects for consideration threaded through them. The profession will aim to take account of the need for racial literacy in assessment, interventions and research as well as look to the leadership of EPS for an informed understanding of anti-racist theory and practice.

The use of the SDEP/ASPEP self-evaluation framework will be a key starting point for leadership, in particular the element of this framework that looks specifically at anti-racism.

This framework has adapted the HGIOS structure to develop a series of challenge questions that specifically relate to Educational Psychology Services, with a studied look at anti-racism practice in EPS. Leadership within EPS will have responsibility for embedding self-evaluation in improvement plans and thus must have a high-level understanding of what factors contribute to an anti-racist EPS.

Key considerations include looking closely at the culture and ethos of an EPS and how challenge and debate around anti-racist questions are embedded in its practice. Processes such as recruitment and induction should be carefully considered in relation to systemically applied principles of anti-racism and equity.

University of Dundee: Educational Psychologist Training Route

In a recent ASPEP focus group, University of Dundee was identified as a key player in tackling anti-racism as it is the sole provider of training for Educational Psychologists in Scotland. It is hoped that the principles of anti-racism can be weaved through all aspects of training, rather than taught as a discrete and stand-alone topic.

University of Dundee, in preparation for the taught doctorate taking on its first cohort in Autumn 2025, will set up three working groups looking at: Selection and Recruitment for the course; Placement in EPS for trainee EPs; and a Reference Group that will consider the programme and content of the taught doctorate.

Representation from ASPEP and the SDEP will contribute to these groups and will seek to ensure, in conjunction with University staff, that full consideration of equality and diversity issues will be fed into these three working groups.

Outcomes and Impact

The aim of this position paper on anti-racism is to make a statement of intent and plan for the future of the profession as well as guide leaders in relation to expectations of their practice. It is hoped that this acts as an interim paper that sets out the intentions of ASPEP with support from the SDEP.

ASPEP's aims are:

- An agreed definition of what anti-racism is, and looks like, in the context of Scottish EPS
- That EPs feel informed, knowledgeable and skilled in anti-racism. This understanding will provide support for colleagues and stakeholders
- For EPs of colour to feel psychologically safe in Scottish EPS
- For ongoing CLPL on anti-racism to be provided and supported by the SDEP and ASPEP
- To increase diversity across the profession in conjunction with University of Dundee
- EPS Leaders engage with the CLPL in relation to anti-racism
- EPS induction and recruitment processes demonstrate a commitment to anti-racist practices
- That leaders take responsibility for the culture and ethos that support the principles of anti-racism within their EPS
- That assessment and intervention practices within EPS are considered culturally sensitive

References

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ⁱⁱ When seeking the voice of children or young people of colour, an understanding of which questions which may be intrusive or insensitive is needed. Also, consideration of who captures that voice is required.