

Anti-Racism in the Built Environment

Introduction

The built environment plays a critical role in shaping communities, workplaces, and opportunities. To build a sector that is fair, innovative, and sustainable, it is not enough to be “not racist” — organisations and individuals must be actively anti-racist.

This guide outlines what anti-racism means in practice within the built environment and provides practical actions to help create equitable, respectful, and inclusive workplaces.

What Is Anti-Racism?

Anti-racism is the active process of identifying, challenging, and changing policies, behaviours, and cultures that perpetuate racial inequality.

It goes beyond intent and focuses on impact, accountability, and action.

Why Anti-Racism Matters in the Built Environment

Racial inequality affects:

- Recruitment and progression
- Site and workplace culture
- Psychological safety
- Retention of talent
- Leadership representation

Anti-racist organisations are:

- Safer and more inclusive
- More innovative and productive
- Better positioned to serve diverse communities
- Stronger in reputation and trust

Racism in the Built Environment: How It Can Appear

1. Individual Racism

Everyday behaviours or language that reinforce racial stereotypes or exclusion.

Examples:

- Questioning competence based on race
- Comments about accents, names, or appearance

- Microaggressions framed as jokes

2. Institutional Racism

Policies or practices that disadvantage certain racial groups.

Examples:

- Lack of diversity in leadership
- Informal hiring and promotion processes
- Unequal access to high-profile projects
- Inconsistent disciplinary practices

3. Cultural Racism

Norms or traditions that centre one experience while excluding others.

Examples:

- “Fit” based on similarity
- Social activities that exclude cultural or religious needs
- Resistance to conversations about race

Moving from Awareness to Action

For Individuals

- Educate yourself on racial bias and lived experiences
- Challenge stereotypes and microaggressions when safe to do so
- Listen without defensiveness
- Use inclusive and respectful language
- Reflect on personal bias and privilege

For Leaders and Managers

- Set clear expectations for behaviour
- Actively intervene when issues arise
- Ensure fair recruitment, promotion, and pay practices
- Create psychologically safe spaces for feedback
- Be visible and accountable in your commitment

For Organisations

- Review policies and procedures for bias
- Collect and analyse diversity data responsibly
- Embed anti-racism into leadership frameworks
- Provide ongoing training, not one-off sessions
- Partner with diverse suppliers and communities

Responding to Racism in the Workplace

If racism occurs:

- Take concerns seriously
- Respond promptly and fairly
- Protect those affected from retaliation
- Focus on learning and corrective action
- Communicate outcomes transparently where appropriate

Silence and inaction reinforce harm.

Measuring Progress

Anti-racism requires continuous evaluation. Consider:

- Representation at all levels
- Retention and progression rates
- Employee feedback and engagement
- Accountability mechanisms for leaders
- Clear reporting and response processes

Key Takeaways

- Anti-racism is active, not passive.
- Leadership accountability is essential.
- Culture change requires consistency and courage.
- Everyone has a role to play.



Further Support

BPIC provides resources, training, and guidance to support anti-racist practices across the built environment.

Visit the [BPIC Resource Portal](#) or contact the BPIC team for further information.