

Taking the lead on talking about race, racism and anti-racist practice in educational psychology services

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NAPEP Leadership Conference 14th May 2021



This workshop is an opportunity to think about how PEPs can lead on talking about race, racism and anti-racist practices with their services. It focuses on the importance of PEPs engaging in personal work before moving to a focus on practice and supporting EPs to do this also. Positioning theory is used to provide a framework for thinking about a PEPs agency in how this work is taken forward in our services and our LAs. It will also include time to think about opportunities for PEP peer support that will strengthen our local, regional and national commitment to this area of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Contracting this conversation with you

- "I'm not a race expert" – but I'm not race ignorant either and I know how to lead
- "It's not my intention..."
- My personal work informs my practice
- These slides will come with my full notes and a pdf of a paper I reference

1. I wanted to do this workshop to further stimulate conversations between PEPs on this area of leadership. I know that there is a range of work happening in services, some I know about and some I don't, but I'd like to know more about. I wanted to share how I've been thinking about my own leadership in this area with the hopes that it may lead to further collaborations between PEPs, strengthen our work in this area and keep the topic of race and anti-racist practice high profile.
2. My first caveats to this workshop is to say I'm not setting myself up as an expert, but I am trying to own what I do know and use that to guide my approach. I think it is understandable as PEPs to feel that we need an expert to come and help us talk about race and racism, and I have done that for my previous service and it's helpful. But what I am setting out today is that even if we get a kick-start from someone who is confident in leading conversations around race and racism, it's not going to be enough. I'm setting out my stall to say that this is something we need to lead on purposefully over time and so, I think, we need to acknowledge our own position on race, race and EP practice and, race and leadership to consider how that position affects our agency in role.
3. If I say something, phrase something, seem to be treating the topic of race and racism in any way that is upsetting let me know either now or afterwards. I promise I won't fall on the "It wasn't my intention..." defense. And I'll be able to listen to the impact of my words on you without trying to diminish what you are telling me to fix my own difficult

feelings.

4. The importance of personal work is key to this workshop – the reading of books, documentaries, podcasts, listening to lived experiences of black and brown colleagues. Doing this work is leading me to acknowledge my own acts of racism and what being white has given me. I'm disappointed it took me so long to do this work, but now I am, and now I know where I am with my learning, I recognize that I still have a lot more personal work to do. I will reference some of the books and group work I have done and am doing to illustrate how the personal work supports the leadership work. I acknowledge that I am not the only one in this virtual room that has done personal work. I acknowledge that the personal work of white PEPs will be different to the personal work of black and brown PEPs. I am speaking from the position of being a white PEP leading on talking about race in my services. I don't know what it is like leading on this subject if you are a black or brown PEP. I am aiming to focus on this topic in a way that I hope is universally helpful to all PEPs.
5. Do ask questions along the way or put comments and questions in the chat box.

What I intend to cover...

Outcomes for this workshop

Personal work

"Whose driving this in the service?" - What I've been doing

The current zeitgeist where you work: how is talking about anti-racism positioned in your LA?

Leadership work - reference to Pendleton & Furnham model

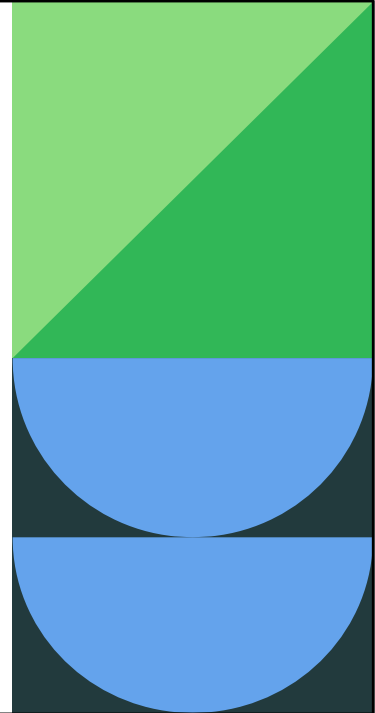
PEP peer support - where can we go with this?

What's the mood in your LA for this area of work?

Outcomes for this workshop...best hopes!

By the end of this workshop, I hope to have provoked you to think about:

- Your own personal work on race and racism
- How are you positioned and how have you positioned yourself in the work of leading on anti-racist practice? How do these positions affect your agency?
- How can we use PEP peer support to build our knowledge, skills and confidence in this area of leadership.



As EPs we have our psychological theories that guide our practice. As leaders we have our leadership theories to guide us also. A psychological theory that I find very useful to my own leadership is Positioning Theory (Rom Harre). Positions are like story lines, and these positions are defined by the rights and duties assigned to the actors (duties given to me either by my JD or by the expectations of what I should do, by my boss, by my team members). In brief, this theory helps me to think about how others in my LA, my boss, my teams position me and what that position leads to – what do they expect of me, what do they think I can do. At the same time, I can actively position myself in ways that can affect the agency I have – what do I think I should be doing in this role and what does that self-positioning allow me to do.

By doing the personal work on talking about race and racism, examining my own experiences of being white, growing up white, living in a predominantly white society I now find it easier to be someone who can talk about race and racism, and so I position myself in situations where I talk about race and racism – the personal work has given me agency to position my leadership on this area, and by self-positioning in this way, I have agency to act in certain ways as a leader.

Therefore, I see a direct link between doing the personal work and then putting this work into practice as a leader of EP and other services. I hope you will go away from today and

think about how you position yourself and how others position you. How does this positioning impact on the importance, time, effort that is given over to this area of work. I hope this will support your thinking around where you need to go next in your leadership of talking about race and racism.

I hope that this thinking will generate opportunities where PEPs find others to talk to/with about race, racism and leading services in these talks.

Personal work #1

- Autumn 2018 - Lambeth Council accused of institutional racism
- Clear messages from black EPs of frustration: repeat of intention to change, here we are again, nothing changes, don't want to be the one to always have to raise the conversation of race in the service

Very aware of my silence (but not uncomfortable about it!), on the one hand understanding the frustration, but on the other hand, not really understanding what was going on for my black colleagues, feeling ignorant

'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race' Reni Eddo-Lodge

This book taught me what White Privilege is

Represented education on equality group - creating pledges, way forward etc. (2019) - still felt shallow



There is always an autobiographical element associated with positioning theory, so some history is needed to frame my eventual wake-up. I was not leading the conversation, I was not driving the conversation on racial equality in the service. I positioned myself as a leader who was happy for the equalities policy to be reviewed, for time to be given over to discussion in team meetings, but I was not driving this. I did not position myself as someone who was leading this agenda. I didn't understand my part in this. "I'm not a racist."

On reflection I can see that I didn't see race as something I ever talked about in regards to being white – race was about other skin colours

Then I read Reni Eddo-Lodge's book and suddenly (and it did feel sudden, like I was jerked out of the Truman Show where I had a very binary view of racism as overt racism) suddenly acknowledge many things about my whiteness that I was conscious of, but didn't really allow myself to sit and think about.

I knew I needed to be 'seen' to be more active in leading on tackling institutionalised racism in the council and what we should be doing as EPs. Joined the DCS's working group on equalities, I partly joined this group to see what learning I could get out of it – but that wasn't the purpose of the group (to teach me!) This focused on talking about race (as this

was the work, 'BAME' Forum were working closely with the Chief Exec) but on reflection I can see how it quickly wanted to go to practical actions, pledges, focus groups to share pledges, cultural events. I found it hard to see how the work we were doing would have the impact it needed, it felt like a huge uphill struggle and, to be frank, an add on to my other work. I felt that my involvement was shallow, lip-service, I was represented, I was around the table, but I wasn't really convinced that what we were doing would have any impact and would just frustrate the black EPs in my service further.

Personal work cont.

- On my shelf in 2020, unread, I had:



The 'shallow' nature of my knowledge and involvement in leading anti-racist approaches in my role as PEP in 2019 did result in the recognition of my ignorance and I wanted to actively change this. At the start of 2020 I had these books on my shelf that I wanted to read to further my understanding of racism. By June 2020 I hadn't read any of them yet. And when George Floyd was murdered I was unprepared as PEP to understand how that event affected my black and brown colleagues.

EPs started to share helpful resources and In July 2020 I watched James O'Brien interview with Akala [Akala deconstructs race, class, and Britain's modern myths | Unfiltered with James O'Brien #32 – YouTube](#) which was recorded in May 2018. August I read his book. Akala taught me about White Supremacy and added to my own understanding of how I was clinging to an idea of Empire that was about 'Britain leads the way' without balancing it with the damage done by the British rule and the impact on society's attitudes in everyday life.

Also listened to Affua Hirsch podcast on Audible [We Need to Talk About the British Empire Audiobook | Afua Hirsch | Audible.co.uk](#) circa July 2020, this taught me about White Supremacy.

By September 2020, I felt more knowledgeable and aware.

"Whose driving this in the service?" - What I've been doing as PEP with my SMT

Lambeth - June 2020 - February 2021

- EPS whole team reflective space (20-25 people)
- Pupil Support Services joint reflective space (20-25 people)
- Presentation by behaviour consultant on impact of George Floyd, what the Black Lives Matter was all about
- Standing item on team meeting agenda - still conversational/discursive (EPS)
- Added objective to EPS Service Development Plan
- Yr 1 TEPs survey of team using the DECP doc
- External consultants (EP) lead a whole team morning on talking about race and racism (Jan 2021)
- Setting the interview questions and presentation for the upcoming new PEP interviews
- Next steps - small group talking



Promoting Racial Equality within Educational Psychology Services:
A report from the DECP Working Party on Anti-Racism

Very differently to 2018, when I was silent, I have made a decision to position myself as the person driving this agenda in the service from late summer/September 2020 onwards. By this time I felt that I could talk about race being difficult to talk about (!) but that it was essential that we did.

My view was that the personal work was really important and I recognised the drive in team members to stop talking about it and to do some action. However, I kept re-iterating that we needed to stick with a period of self-exploration and to not rush to write policies, based on my experience of the DCSs group – it would be shallow unless we had engaged in the personal work first. By mid autumn it felt like we could move towards doing talk in team meetings and plan activities that would lead to ‘better talking’.

Jan – we had a CPD morning (with external facilitators - 2 EPs who led a training, at the request of the team) [**I'd listened to White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo in preparation**] followed by an hour in the follow-up (and my final team meeting). Experiences had been shared by black and brown EPs in both sessions and frustration around white silence was discussed at length and white solidarity crept in. The personal preparation work – reading White Fragility – helped to manage my feelings around managing/containing what was happening in the virtual room. I realised that, on the topic of silence, I either made my black EPs feel safe or I made my white EPs feel safe – (I've

since read **DiAngelo & Sensoy (2012) Getting slammed: White depictions of race discussions as arenas of violence** which really helped me think about feeling safe in multi-racial discussions. It's a good paper I think to have as a reading group with EPs to consider what reactions the white participants had to the 'purpose of' discussing race). I will attach this with the presentation.

At this point (Jan 21) I'd also had another whole pupil support services meeting where I'd invited someone from the council to talk about EDI in the council and then opened it up to what have you all been doing since the summer on thinking about this – and was hit by a lot of white silence and white innocence on the topic. I realised my naivete at not preparing this group better, at thinking 4 or 5 separate services would be able to come together and talk openly about this topic. All I ended up doing was upsetting my black colleagues.

PEP #2

Brighton & Hove February 2021 - present

- I've been positioned as someone who can talk about race! "We've been waiting for you to start..."
- Find out what has happened already, explaining what I had been doing already
- Talking about race and racism in both of my PEP slots at Team meeting - setting out it's importance for our service development
- Sharing my personal work - Me and White Supremacy group with the Senior Leadership Team that I now belonged to
- Next steps - collaborate with the EPs on how we will approach the next steps- survey them, asked them for questions to be included
- Making it clear that we cannot look at our practice until we have done our personal work

What am I doing now?

Moving to B&H my first task was to set out to my new team what kind of psychologist I am, what is important to me as a leader of psychological services (and other services).

Keeping it on the agenda, keeps the conversation alive and keeps the priority of this work high, even if the activities may be something coming in the future, it's important to me that my EPs know it's important to me and how I think about this area of practice.

Collaboration with my Eps on how we should do this work is important – we are psychologists and we understand the power of group working, group dynamics and we know the impact of talking in large, medium and small groups. The survey is currently being designed with 2 other EPs in the team being my reflective practitioners to hone the questions. I hope to use it, analyse it, feed it back to the team and use it to shape the work we decide to do. Not everyone will be at the same place, so much of this work will be on what is required by all, what is required by some, the different approaches we will need to ensure all can be included etc.

Lots of new terms

- White privilege
- White supremacy
- White solidarity
- White silence
- White fragility

How do these terms make you feel when you hear them used?





If you're white and these phrases feel jarring, I think they are supposed to be. However, these terms have become part of common parlance on any talk about race, but unless you really understand them/sit with these concepts, I think they can feel over-used, mis-used and mis-understood and used tokenistically – this is what I'm trying to avoid happening in my service.

Back to personal work – I love to read, I'm happy to read these books or listen to them, basically do learning by myself. Recently I've been taking part in a group activity led by my AD with her direct reports, and it's been really helpful and a different experience from thinking by myself or thinking with those I lead. Having conversations with **peers** has made me think more deeply and sit with discomfort for longer. This is planned work and happens 1hr every fortnight and we take turns to lead the discussions. It's positioned as important work.

These phrases are now something I understand, use and do not feel threatened by. These books and the group I'm in really encourage the idea of sitting with the concepts, really doing the work and thinking deeply.

The current zeitgeist where you work: how is talking about anti-racism positioned in your LA?

- Lambeth – Independent review by Patrick Vernon OBE led to report December 2019
Race and Diversity in Lambeth Council
Recommendations included in an updated Borough Plan
Written into the new SEND & Inclusion Strategy
- Brighton & Hove – survey findings led to:
Becoming an anti-racist council
Becoming an anti-racist city
Anti-racist strategy due – elements already written into SEND Strategy 2021-2026 and subsequent divisional and service plans

In 2020 the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd created a zeitgeist to “do something” to address institutional racism and for white people to understand their role in everyday racism.

The energy surrounding this time has led to some councils immediately acknowledging that they need to do something as an organisation and within the organisation and they have embedded the work on becoming anti-racists into their plans. This helps the PEP to position themselves as a leader who needs to carry out this work. This gives authority to writing it into service plans and spending time on this work.

What if your council or directorate has not embedded anything like this? How does this impact your position on leading the work? If you are not positioned by others to do the work, how can you self-position?

We are almost a year on from the summer of 2020 Black Lives Matter movement – what is the current zeitgeist? BLM and Covid defined the mood of 2020/21 – will talking about race, racism and anti-racism disappear again?

How will this report impact on your conversations?

For example, how will this comment (p36) will be felt by your teams:

Another term that is highly controversial and contested is 'White privilege'. The phrase, coined in the USA, is undoubtedly alienating to those who do not feel especially privileged by their skin colour. Phrases like 'White privilege' and 'White fragility' imply that it is White people's attitudes and behaviours that primarily cause the disadvantage experienced by ethnic minorities. It also reinforces the perception that being an ethnic minority in the UK is to be treated unfairly by default. The evidence we have studied does not support this. The Commission rejects this approach, believes it fails to identify the real causes for disparities, and that it is counterproductive and divisive.

There is something, however, in the idea that even in a relatively open society like today's UK a psychological comfort can be derived from looking like the majority of people around you. A better term, which usefully captures the tendency for groups to favour their own, is the concept of 'affinity bias'.

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities

Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities:
The Report

March 2021

And then this came out...

You'll need to come to your own conclusions on the value you give to this report, but I question the evidence (see next two slides comparing sample of people who provided the data v number of black and Asian people in the UK in 2011 census) and I worry about the highlighted text – and suggest anyone who has read 'White Fragility' by Robin DiAngelo will possibly conclude that the commission *hasn't* read it and that this response is a desire to, for some reason, protect the status quo.

We need to keep conversations going, not to close them down. I understand the need to give hope that systems are open to all, but the lived experiences I've heard would still suggest that it depends what we are measuring ourselves against:

Achievement gap for black-Caribbean boys.

Adultification of black girls and boys.

The disproportionate amount of black and mixed heritage children excluded and on YOS orders.

This is enough for me to think that it's not time to congratulate our progress yet.

Appendix B: Call for evidence

The call for evidence consultation ran from 26 October 2020 to 30 November 2020. Responses were invited from the public and local communities, public private and third sector organisations, researchers and academics and others who wished to share their views. To understand why such disparities exist, and what works and what does not, submissions of evidence were requested to provide answers to 10 questions which focused on education, health, crime and policing, and employment and enterprise. There were 2,329 responses submitted in total from 325 organisations and 2,004 individuals, including academics. Responses were received from the following organisations:

- 21K Digital Media Social Enterprise
- 4in10: London's Child Poverty Network

[Bodies credited in UK race review distance themselves from findings | Race | The Guardian](#)

The evidence base for this report is very concerning and it's worth reading the Guardian article that provides a summary of what the contributors to the report think about its findings.

The 2011 Census data shows that:

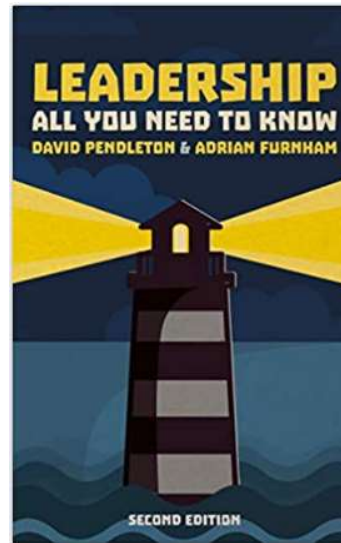
- the total population of England and Wales was 56.1 million
- 48.2 million people (86.0%) were from White ethnic groups, with 45.1 million of those identifying with the White British group (80.5% of the population) and 2.5 million with the Other White ethnic group (4.4%)
- 4.2 million people (7.5%) were from Asian ethnic groups, with 1.4 million of those identifying with the Indian ethnic group (2.5%), and 1.1 million with the Pakistani ethnic group (2.0%)
- 1.9 million people (3.3%) were from Black ethnic groups, with just under 1 million of those identifying with the Black African ethnic group (1.8%), and 0.6 million with the Black Caribbean ethnic group (1.1%)
- 1.2 million people (2.2%) had Mixed ethnicity, with 0.4 million of those identifying with the Mixed White/Black Caribbean group (0.8%), and 0.3 million with the Mixed White and Asian group (0.6%)
- 0.6 million people (1.0%) belonged to other ethnic groups

2,329 as a % of 7.3m = 0.03% of the population from 10 yrs ago (we know the population of the UK has increased). A good sample size with a 95% confidence would be 270,100 – which is huge amount and not practical, but little info in this report about how sampling was carried out. Which is why I feel the findings are controversial and do not reflect the zeitgeist of last summer.

Implications for leadership of educational psychology services

Pendleton & Furnham (2016) - Five Enablers of Leading:

1. Inspire - so people want to engage
2. Focus - clear steer on what need to do
3. Enable - provide safety
4. Reinforce - make sure it's happening
5. Learn - show yourself as learner



The personal work and the self-positioning will cover 1 and 2.

I want to focus on no.3 and 4.

5 comes through in all of these enablers.

Enable - time, space, resource, but especially safety

DiAngelo & Sensory (2012) *Getting slammed: White depictions of race discussions as arenas of violence*

- White people haven't had to think about race and when they do it creates discomfort in them and defence
- White people need to feel safe to explore their feelings
- Black and brown people need to feel safe to have their experiences and feelings taken seriously
- How do we create situations where learning can happen?
- My goal is to reach a point where white, black and brown colleagues can talk about race, racism and anti-racism together in a space where **all** feel safe to discuss uncomfortable thoughts and feelings

- If you've never had to think about your race before, if you have been living under the belief that you are not in anyway racist because you hold a binary construct of racism, to have this belief challenged in an open group is going to lead to fight or flight - silence or attack (denial)
- If you have to listen to colleagues deny your lived experience, or grown used to avoiding the subject because of the distress/defensiveness it leads to in your white colleagues, this experience will lead to frustration, jadedness, etc.

It's a dramatic title, but a really good starting point I think to explore with EPs what can happen in multi-racial groups when talking about race. It might feel a safe way for EPs to think about this because it's an academic paper, they can talk about what happens in the group in the paper, a step removed. This paper may be a good way to open up conversations about how we prepare ourselves for talking in multi-racial groups.

If you've never had to think about your race before, if you have been living under the belief that you are not in anyway racist because you hold a binary construct of racism, to have this belief challenged in an open group is going to lead to fight or flight – silence or attack (denial), but how is this felt by black and brown colleagues, how does this affect their safety in whole team sessions?

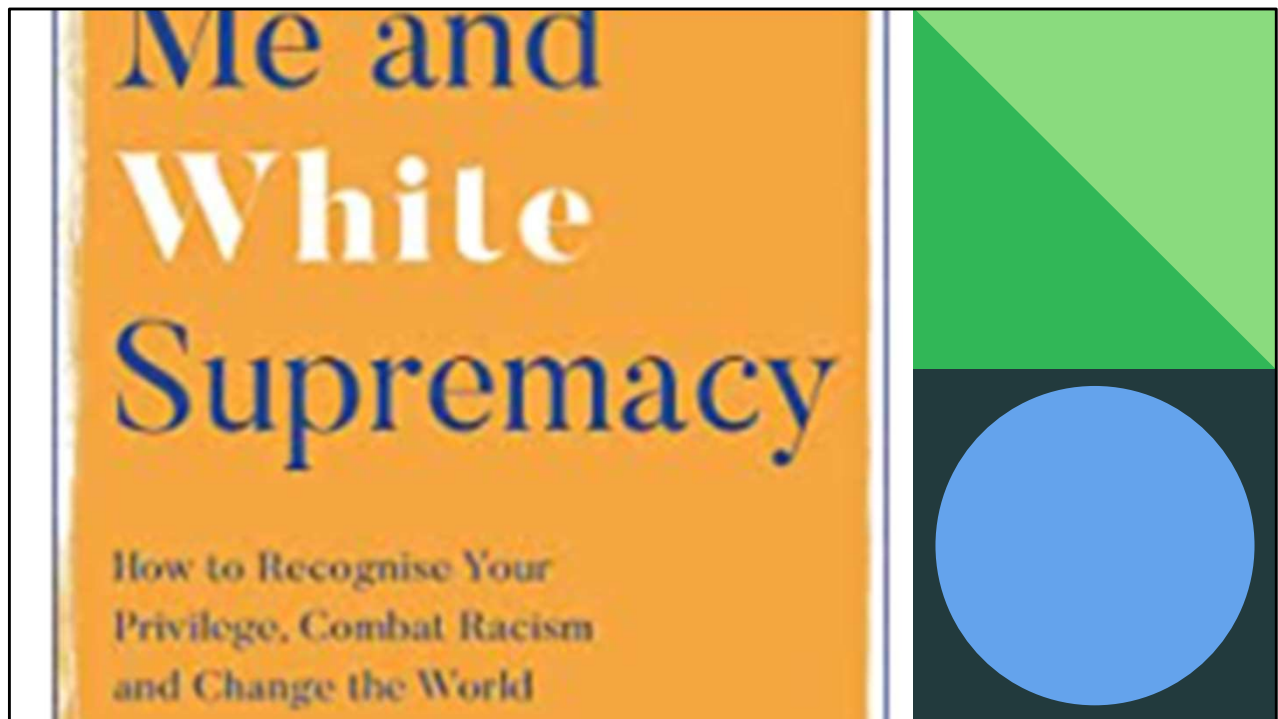
If you do not have colleagues who can provide lived experiences of racism experienced by black and brown colleagues – look for helpful examples online:

Brixton: Flames on the Frontline podcast on BBC Sounds

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09d2jkg>

'I'm very aware I'm mixed-race here' Guardian film at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18zvlz5CxPE>



I would encourage any white PEP to create or join a group to work through this book. And then to enable such group work to happen in your teams.

Reinforce - making sure the work is happening

- Collaboration on setting the work agenda and then contracting that work with the whole team
- PEP modelling genuine learning experiences - make ourselves vulnerable, acknowledge our 'don't knows', create containment that allows learning to happen
- Build trust in all colleagues - white, black and brown - boundaries of what is expected of all, how individual differences will be considered and that if someone cannot take up a role in discussions this isn't seen as them being allowed to 'get away' with doing the work.
- Creating an understanding of inclusion and the need for many ways to achieve the outcome we are aiming for
- Managing urgency with the long view

“You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink”

This is where it is important to use collaborative approaches to this work, paired with trust that any decision to allow someone to not attend sessions, is explained through the lens of inclusion. Preparation is essential to the safety needed. It is important to explore with the team what safety in this context is – and as EPs we think we know what this is, but we need to understand specifically what safety means when talking about race because of the slip into white defensiveness. EPs know how to set this kind of thing up, we need to apply our knowledge to ourselves.

We know from setting up group work that there needs to be an element of 'sign-up' and if people are mandated to be there you can spend the first part of group forming dealing with this issue rather than the one you want to spend time on. Using yourself as a model for using personal work learning as the pre-cursor to anti-racist practice learning is key. Positive reinforcement involves the feeding back into the team what the benefits have been of taking part in the work. This is a way to bring everyone along. Part of this preparation work is exploring and naming what the impact will be on a black or brown colleague if they see white colleagues not taking part.

We need to be aware in our planning for this work that there will be urgency a want to see

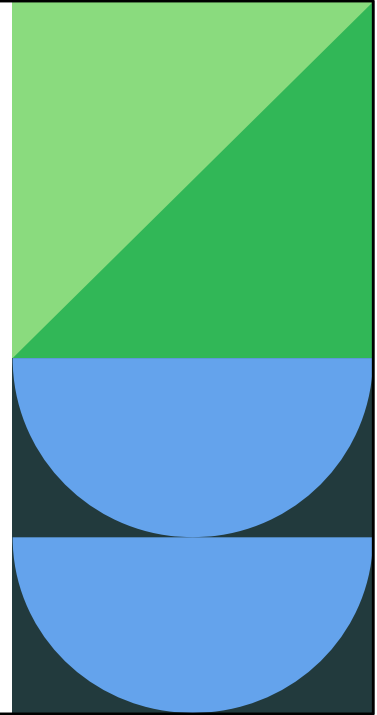
things happening and changed now, and the knowledge that it will also take time to make the kind of real change we want to see in people.

PEP peer support

- NAPEP - we have everything in place to make this happen
- Keep it on the regional and exec agenda
- Use our contact to set up peer groups to do the personal work
- Regional meetings to share our work and ideas
- Use peer supervision to help with managing the difficulties that will arise

In summary...

- Personal work is needed before we can practice in an anti-racist way
- Positioning theory can help us think about our agency in the role of PEP
- Leadership theories can help us to examine what is needed to enable us to lead on becoming anti-racist organisations
- We have a strong network of PEPs, we need to set up opportunities to access the support we need and to share our practice



**Questions, comments, reflections,
thoughts and feelings**



References

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- Brixton: Flames on the Frontline podcast on BBC Sounds
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p09d2jkg>
- 'I'm very aware I'm mixed-race here" Guardian film at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18zvlz5CxPE>