**The London Local Government Tackling Racial Inequality Programme**

**Race Equality, Language and Terminology Consultation**

**Context**

The programme’s ‘Demonstrating Leadership Working Group’ set out to establish a partnership narrative around language and terminology through the lens of racial equality that advocates for the disaggregation of ‘BAME’, proposing that we must refer to our communities at the most granular level possible, where appropriate. In contexts where collectivism is appropriate (typically data collection and analysis), the working group wanted to understand participants' views on different collective terminology and its use for and amongst Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic groups.

This narrative aims to guide local government organisations and is grounded in the perspective that conscious language and terminology are important components of any race equality journey:

* They are central to understanding and challenging historical, societal, and political perspectives.
* They can reflect institutional and systemic attitudes.
* They are tools that represent how people and groups want to be seen or how they identify; equally, they can be used to indicate how others view those groups.

To engage meaningfully with our programme priorities, it is important to have the correct framework and language to reference Black Asian and Multi-Ethnic individuals and communities and to engage under-served communities in a language that is meaningful to them. Language is a powerful tool and crudely conflating diverse groups erases identity and leads to broad decision-making that does not recognise the ethnic disparities in the UK.

**Guidance**

Our consultation highlights that there is no agreed or shared approach to collective language, whether that be eliminating its use or selecting the most appropriate collective term for the context. For some, particular collective terms are empowering and reclaim aspects of identity, whereas for others collective terminology from its conception has clouded the richness of identities in the UK.

The findings do indicate that some terms are more palatable than others, and perhaps more importantly some terms are significantly less palatable than others. However, the report highlights that there are differences in preference between demographic and sectors. Moreover, it is important to recognise that certain terminology has more socialisation than other terminology, and language is a constantly evolving domain which means no one term can ever be held up as the most appropriate.

Therefore, the findings of this research have led to the development of principles around language that should be used to inform and encourage conversations around language and terminology within organisations ensuring that it is always intentional and meaningful. The resources provided should be used to facilitate open conversations within organisations, so that terminology can be tailored to reflect the unique attitude of each organisation.

* Appendix 1 - The London Local Government Tackling Racial Inequality Programme – Race Equality, Language and Terminology Consultation Report
* Appendix 2 – Summary of findings (Powerpoint)

**Overview of findings and recommendations**

Building on previous research and public sentiment, the Tackling Racial Inequality programme does not support the use of the acronym ‘BAME’ or ‘BME’.

* Collective terminology should always be spelt out to avoid abstraction.
* Ethnic groups should be ordered alphabetically in charts, tables and lists with ‘other’, and ‘unknown’, as the final category.
* Always use capital letters when referring to ethnic groups.

Overall, the respondents are not comfortable being categorised by a collective term that encompasses all backgrounds except White British. If collectivism is necessary, ‘**Ethnically Diverse’** and **‘Black, Asian & Multi-Ethnic’** are the overall preferred terms. However, the qualitative responses of the research have allowed the programme to develop four guiding principles on language and terminology rather than prescribe particular terms:

1. **Specificity**

Be as factual as possible when referring to, presenting conclusions or findings, and making recommendations for ethnically diverse groups. It is recommended to avoid vague terminology that is all-encompassing and collective terminology should never be used for convenience.

1. **Context**

Only use collective terminology where necessary and be guided by the context of the situation and the content of the work reported on. If the context is not decisive, then use the preferred collective terms outlined in this report or use language interchangeably to reflect the complexity of individual and community identity.

1. **Empowerment**

Recognising that language is a powerful tool, choose terminology that centres on empowerment and positivity. This allows us to challenge historical labelling that infers marginalisation and discrimination, particularly avoiding the term ‘minority’.

1. **Choice and transparency**

The value of choice is important for those who are typically referred to by collective terminology. The recommendation is to always engage groups and recognise their right to choose as well as the overall challenge in establishing a consensus on collective terminology. The approach to language and terminology should always be open and transparent and tailored to reflect the unique attitude of each organisation, community or individual. Therefore, the approach must recognise that within organisations groups and individuals will have different preferences. For example, staff networks may self-refer using different terminology than the organisational guidance recognises.

Our qualitative findings have allowed us to develop the above four guiding principles. However, it is important to recognise that language is constantly evolving and adapting. The scope of work around language and terminology will continue to progress and evolve to reflect the most recent sentiments.

This Tackling Racial Inequality Programme consultation was initiated by the Demonstrating Leadership Working Group. The research was carried out by London Councils. If you have any queries or would like more information, please contact:

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