

Stage 1: Focus groups & interviews

Stage one of the project involved conducting interviews and focus groups with year 8 and year 10 pupils at 6 different secondary schools in Sandwell. Outlined below are some of the topics discussed and resources used during the interview.

THEME 1: What? Where? Who? How much?	
Aim:	To find out what the children think 'racism' is. Where they believe it occurs and how frequently adolescents experience racism. Who may be targeted, who are the instigators? The nature of these incidents.
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of racism: Ask each pupil to write a definition of what they think racism is on a piece of paper. Elaborate and discuss. • Media examples: Shilpa Shetty in the Big Brother house or Prince Harry's use of racist language: Use to create discussions around whether the children believe it is a form of racism.
Prompt questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is racism? 2. What different forms of racism are there in this area (e.g. school neighbourhood)? Have you ever seen these behaviours? 3. Who is targeted with racist behaviours (what types or groups of people)? 4. What form can racist behaviours take? 5. Where is racism most likely to occur? Where is it most likely to occur in Sandwell? 6. Who is most likely to act in a racist way (what types or groups of people)? 7. When people experience racism, is it a 'one-off' or do you think it happens a lot?

THEME 2: Feelings and Behaviour	
Aim:	To find out how the children think experiencing racism can affect someone's behaviour and feelings (victim and onlooker). Does experiencing racism affect feelings towards the victim's ethnic identity? Would experiences of racism change feelings about school/the environment they encounter racism in? Does racism affect self-esteem, aspirations, and feelings of belonging?
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Sad Eyes" poem: [Can lead on to Theme 3] Ask the children to read the Sad Eyes poem between them. It's quite a sad poem and may or may not be how someone would react to racism, what do the children think? How do they think the writer feels? How does the person in the poem feel? Do you think this is the first time that the person in the poem has experienced racism? Have they ever had a friend who has been 'teased'? Would it change their feelings about going to school? • Quotes: [Can lead on to Theme 3] These are various quotes from children in schools in Sandwell. These can be used as discussion points: Do you agree with what this person thinks? Why/why not? Why do you think this person thinks this? Do you think this person has experienced racism? Why? Do you think this may affect how they feel? Do you think that they identify strongly with their ethnic group? What makes you think that? Why might this be?
Prompt questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do people feel when they experience racist discrimination? 2. How does it affect their behaviour? 3. Does it affect how good they feel about themselves? 4. Could it affect how they feel about their ethnic group? 5. Could it affect how they feel about school?

THEME 3: Strategies	
Aim:	To find out what strategies adolescents use to deal with racism and how effective are they at maintaining well-being. Where do adolescents get support from?
Resources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sad Eyes” poem: Why do you think that the person may have been targeted by racist teasing? Do you think their friend helped them by talking to them? Do you think this experience affected the person for a long time? Why/why not? Do you think this will have helped the person in the poem deal better with future experiences of racism? Have you ever had to give support to someone who has experienced racism? What did/would you say? Did they find it valuable? Did they go anywhere else to seek advice? Do you think people who experience racism talk about it much or not? Would your friend talk to their school or parents? Why/why not? • Quotes: Do these quotes show that people find support in their friends? How do you think this quote shows support? Where do you think this person might get support from? What makes you think that? Do you think that people need support from friends, family, schools, community? Do you think that people ask for support from friends, family, schools, and community? How might each different person/place give different support? Do you think this would help them? How do you think support helps people deal with experiences of racism?
Prompt questions:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why are people racist? 2. Where do you think this might come from? 3. How do people deal with it? 4. Thinking of a time when a friend or family member experience racism, how did they deal with it? What are the most likely responses? 5. Do you think young people have enough support to deal with experiences of racism? 6. Do you think young people need support to deal with experiences of racism? 7. What kind of thing might help people who experience racism cope better? 8. Is there help from friends, family, the school, the community? 9. How well do these strategies work? Are they effective? 10. Do you have ideas on what might work better? How might they work? 11. Do parents ever talk about racism? Is it something they discuss with their children? Do they provide help in dealing with it?

Example of quotes used [Real-life quotes from students in Sandwell and West Midlands]

“Most of them [my friends] are Black but it’s a mix so nobody’s like ‘I’m not talking to you because I’m Black’ kind of thing. We’re not split up or nothing we’re all together.”

“It’s not like a Black boy couldn’t be my friend. It’s just how it is. They’re just my friends. I don’t, like, choose them if they’re White or not.”

“Yeah I’ve got White friends, one of my real good friends is half Asian and half White... out of school it’s mainly mixed race and Black people because I don’t really go out after school with the people from school. Most of my friends are mainly Black or mixed race but I do have some Asian and White friends.”

“...Every now and again, once every three months or something, something comes up, like people just call some people names, like if I’m with a group of Black people or mixed race people, they give dirty looks or say bad words.”

“No-one cares what colour you are really in this school, except you know, I think a lot of Asian people, they’re, like, a little bit racist towards White people...not in an extreme way, but they kind of are. I noticed that when there are White boys, they’ll be following them, and bullying them or something, or being horrible, and I think that’s bad. Yeah. That’s it. But I don’t really have a problem.”

“I am English and people in Wales and Scotland call themselves Welsh and Scottish so I am English not British.”

“I’ve learned so much about my background and where I’ve come from, I think I should defend it still, I don’t think other people should treat me different because of what ethnicity I am. They can treat me different because of my views or whatever...But if they treat me differently because of my colour - I don’t think that’s fair.”

“I am British not English. I don’t like English because I associate it with football hooligans and drinking beer. My roots are in Pakistan – I am a British Asian not an English Asian.”