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Scoping report

Co-development of NCCPE resource for racially equitable public engagement

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Executive summary

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), in partnership with University College London (UCL), is developing an online resource to help Public Engagement Professionals (PEPs) embed racial equity across UK higher education and research institutions.

This report concludes the scoping phase that was informed by three complementary sources of evidence: 1 focus group with the NCCPE Inclusion Advisory Group Racial Equity (IAG-RE) members with knowledge and experience relating to racial equality within public engagement, public participation and/or public involvement, 13 semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in public engagement, research, and community settings, and an online questionnaire completed by 20 practitioners. The scoping identified practitioners' needs, experiences and priorities; specified barriers to racially equitable practice and translated them into recommendations for developing this resource.

The scoping phase will inform the resource's structure and content.

In brief

What we found	Practitioners are committed to racially equitable public engagement but face significant organisational, structural and practical barriers. Existing resources are often perceived as too theoretical and insufficiently grounded in everyday practice.
What users need	Practical guidance, real-world examples, support for difficult conversations, tools to design equitable engagement, resources to influence institutional change and opportunities for ongoing learning.
Guiding principles	The resource should be practical, tailored, community-informed, accessible and supportive. It should help users apply learning in practice rather than simply increase awareness.
Key recommendation	Develop an authored and co-produced resource that complements professional practice.

Target personas and user needs

Users will draw on the resource from a variety of social positions, professional roles and personal experiences. The scoping exercise showed that these differences affect how practitioners carry out racial equity work, including their access to institutional power, their confidence in challenging current practices and the amount of emotional labour they experience.

The resource favours a flexible learning pathways designed for four distinct archetypes: four distinct archetypes or personas:

- **Developing practitioner:** Requires structured step-by-step guidance, templates, and clear terminology to move from uncertainty to action.
- **Experienced practitioner:** Seeks advanced frameworks, practical case studies, and mentoring tools to refine practice and guide colleagues.
- **Change agent:** Needs evidence, negotiation strategies, and audit tools to overcome institutional resistance (70% of questionnaire respondents identified institutional change as their primary need).
- **Community connector:** Depends on transparent governance, equitable power-sharing, and recognition of lived experience as expertise.

Key systemic barriers and practical needs

While practitioners use innovative community outreach and co-production, their efforts face systemic friction, including administrative bureaucracy, limited funding, emotional burnout, and entrenched institutional white-centrism. To counter these barriers, the resource focuses on five primary functional needs:

1. **Actionable guidance:** Task-oriented checklists and decision tools over abstract theory.
2. **Structural framing:** Insights for analysing institutional power dynamics and intersectionality.
3. **Conversation tools:** Scripts, bystander interventions, and facilitation strategies for difficult conversations.
4. **Institutional leverage:** Resources to engage leadership, demonstrate accountability, and embed racial equity into governance.
5. **Continuous growth:** Evolving content and reflective prompts that support anti-racism as a continuous journey.

Core design principles

- **Action-oriented:** Features task-based templates and real-world tools over lengthy theoretical discussions.
- **Tailored and non-linear:** Provides flexible entry points reflecting different roles, authority levels, and social positions.
- **Racial equity-focused:** Explicitly addresses structural racism and intersectionality without diluting content into generalised DEI advice.
- **Community-informed:** Built on co-produced case studies and sector-wide knowledge sharing.
- **Supportive and accessible:** Minimises emotional labour while providing practical psychological safety for users.

Development, implementation and evolution

- **Authored and co-designed**: Rejects anonymous guidance; content will be explicitly authored, transparent about its origins, and iteratively co-developed with practitioners, community partners, and racial equity experts.
- **Living resource:** Designed with a dimension to evolve continuously alongside emerging practice and user feedback.
- **Workflow integration:** Structured for direct alignment with day-to-day operations and professional development.

01 Background, vision and scoping

Background

Racial inequity remains a persistent issue in public engagement, often exacerbated by institutional practices, power structures, and a lack of practical support to promote change. Although awareness of these problems is growing, Public Engagement Professionals (PEPs) face major obstacles to incorporating racially equitable approaches into their work because of competing priorities, limited authority, and a lack of practical resources.

The NCCPE commissioned a team from UCL comprising Vanessa Mignan Jenkins, Emily Dawson and Siddharth Kankaria to create its online resource on racially equitable public engagement for Public Engagement Professionals (PEPs), later referred to as the resource team.

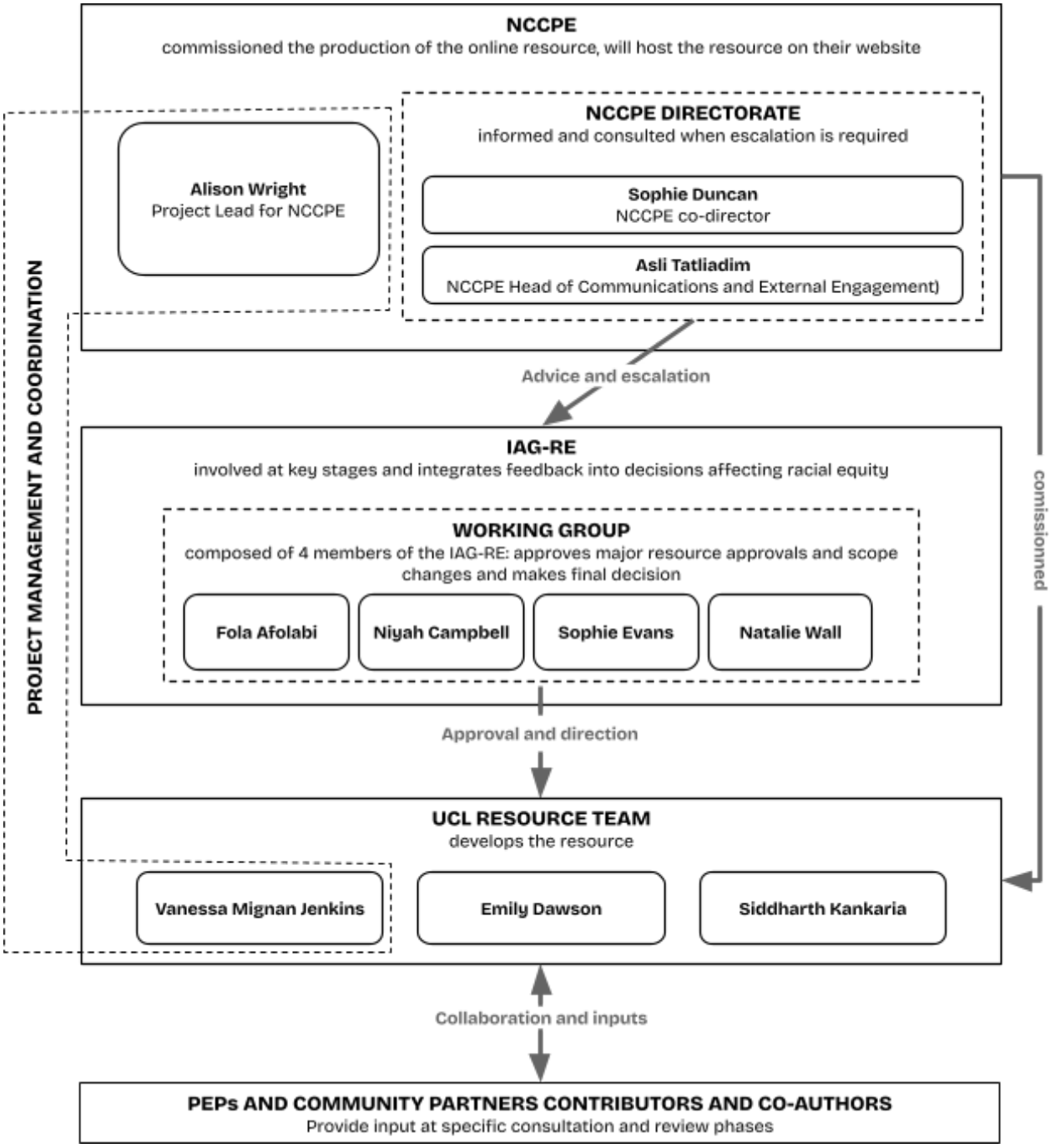
Governance

Seven governance and collaboration structures support the development of the resource:

- *Alison Wright* leads day-to-day **management and coordination** for the NCCPE, with *Vanessa Mignan Jenkins* for UCL.
- The **resource team** develops, coordinates and delivers content (see above).
- The **working group**, which includes 4 members of the NCCPE Inclusion Advisory Group - Racial Equity (IAG-RE), is consulted on resource content development and scope changes and makes final decisions on the content: *Fola Afolabi, Niyah Campbell*, *Sophie Evans and Natalie Wall*,.
- The **IAG-RE** is involved at key stages and integrates feedback into decisions affecting racial equity.
- **PEPs contributors and co-authors** provide input at key stages, with some participating at every stage (scoping,

structure review and prioritisation, content review, user testing) and others only during specific consultation phases.

- The **NCCPE directorate** is informed throughout the project and consulted if there is escalation, a change in scope, budget, or timeline. It approves major deliverables and major scope changes: Sophie Duncan (NCCPE co-director) and Asli Tatliadim (NCCPE Head of Communications and External Engagement).



Vision for the resource

The aim is to help PEPs, researchers, and organisations design, carry out, and assess public engagement that actively promotes racial equity. It should help users move from awareness to action, from diversity to equity, from consultation to partnership, from representation to power sharing, and from projects to institutional change.

Racial equity serves as the resource's guiding principle and objective. We believe that incorporating anti-racist approaches and actions is required to combat racism effectively. We aim to include strategies in the resources that address and dismantle the attitudes, practices, policies, and structures that foster or sustain racial discrimination, even if they are not explicitly labelled as anti-racist. Our approach integrates racial equity, ensuring that individuals identified as racial minorities have equitable opportunities and can attain just outcomes, with a clear commitment to anti-racism.

Intended users

The NCCPE defined the main resource target as PEPs working in higher education and research institutions in the UK, regardless of prior experience with racial equity practice.
Secondary audiences can include PEPs from the NHS, science museums, charities, or funders; research support staff, such as members of DEI teams, institutional leaders, and community partners who influence or take part in public engagement; and others who support or fund institutional change.

Scoping approach

The scoping phase drew on three complementary sources of evidence:

1. One focus group with the NCCPE Inclusion Advisory Group Racial Equity (IAG-RE) members with knowledge and experience relating to racial equality within public engagement, public participation and/or public involvement,
2. Thirteen semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in public engagement, research, and community settings,
3. and an online questionnaire completed by 20 practitioners.

The interviews provided a detailed account of the practitioners' experiences, the problems they encountered and examples of how they carried out their work. The questionnaire was used to determine how widely these themes were shared and to identify priorities for resource needs. The findings from both data sources were combined and analysed to identify common priorities and areas of need.

02 Who will use the resource

Scoping participants' profile

The practitioners interviewed, and those who took part in the questionnaire, came from a wide range of backgrounds and included several experienced practitioners involved in public engagement, research, community partnerships and organisational change. Although most participants were not entirely new to public engagement, their confidence levels, responsibilities and experience incorporating racial equity varied by role, institutional context and positionality.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews identified users including:**
    - Public Engagement Professionals (PEPs)
    - Academics, researchers, research advisors
    - Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) leads
    - Community researchers
    - Lived experience advisors

    - Practitioners working across education, healthcare, charities and community settings

- **Questionnaire findings showed (n=20):**
    - Confidence varied in understanding and applying racial equity approaches:
        - Understanding of racial inequity in public engagement averaged 3.75 out of 5.
        - Promoting anti-racist and/or racially equitable practices averaged 3.45 out of 5.
    - Respondents identified different support needs:
        - 95% reported that public engagement was the main part of their role or a significant aspect of it.
        - 65% had more than five years of public engagement experience.
        - Respondents contributed to strategic planning (85%), organisational culture change (70%) and support and training for academics (65%).

→ Design considerations for the resource: the resource will have flexibility in terms of starting points and divergent pathways to creating racially equitable public engagement.

Cross-cutting consideration: positionality and lived experience

Users will draw on the resource from a variety of social positions, professional roles and personal experiences. The scoping exercise showed that these differences affect how practitioners carry out racial equity work, including their access to institutional power, their confidence in challenging current practices and the amount of emotional labour they experience.

Specifically, practitioners racialised as minorities spoke about undergoing exclusion, having their views dismissed and being given an unfair share of the responsibility for promoting equity work. At

the same time, other participants stressed the importance of better understanding privilege, allyship and their role in carrying change.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:**
  - The participants experienced institutional power and exclusion in different ways.
  - The emotional effort involved in dealing with racism and helping colleagues understand and practice racial equity across all dimensions of public engagement.
  - The necessity of shared responsibility, the provision of “safe spaces”, and the acknowledgement of lived experience as a form of expertise.

- **Questionnaire findings showed**
  - Confidence varied in applying racial equity approaches (see above)
  - Respondents identified different support needs:
    - 70% wanted support with influencing organisational/institutional change to promote racial equity.
    - 45% wanted help creating racially equitable engagement activities.
    - 25% wanted support getting started with racially equitable practice.

→ Design considerations for the resource: the resource should promote allyship, support practitioners' well-being and guide on securing collective accountability, without placing the primary responsibility for effecting change on those experiencing inequity.

User personas

Based on the interviews and questionnaire results, we identified four main user personas. These personas reflect various combinations of experience, responsibilities and objectives. Because practitioners' roles and situations can differ, they may identify with more than one persona or not identify with all characteristics of a given persona.

This is why user personas are not based solely on role or function, but on levels of awareness and practice related to racially equitable public engagement. They are not hierarchical in terms of expertise, experience or knowledge; they reflect diverse personal, professional and institutional contexts for undertaking racial equity work and serve as design archetypes to help us develop learning pathways. They should not be perceived as perfect representations of reality.

Persona 1: Developing practitioner

Experience and context
A practitioner and/or researcher developing confidence in carrying out racially equitable public engagement.

Practice and knowledge
- Relatively new to applying racial equity approaches in public engagement.
- Motivated to improve practice but may be uncertain about where to begin.
- May have responsibility for engagement activities without specialist equity expertise.

Goals
- Understand key principles of racially equitable public engagement.
- Plan and carry out racially equitable engagement activities with confidence, making racial equity the norm in PE practice rather than an added burden.
- Apply practical methods in their daily work.

Fears and frustrations
- Feeling overwhelmed by the topics of racial equity
- Unsure of how to start

Needs
- Clear explanations of terminology and concepts related to racial equity.
- Step-by-step guidance.

- Tools for practical use, along with templates and examples.
- An easy-to-navigate resource and a clear way to learn.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants noted uncertainty among practitioners new to the process and stressed the importance of practical advice over relying solely on abstract frameworks.

- **Questionnaire:** Although respondents were generally experienced, levels of confidence and practice varied:
    - 15% wanted to learn more about racial equity.
    - 10% were just beginning their efforts to achieve racial equity.
    - 45% were trying out various methods.

Persona 2: Experienced practitioner

Experience and context
An experienced practitioner and/or researcher who wishes to develop racially equitable practices further to be able to support others.

Practice and knowledge
- Has an established engagement practice.
- Reflects critically on current approaches.
- Supports colleagues or teams.
- Has reporting structures that incorporate DEI data and frameworks to some degree.

Goals
- Make engagement approaches more racially equitable.
- Access evidence-informed approaches.
- Share knowledge and mentor others.

Fears and frustration
- Often have to convince others of the importance of racial equity

- Struggles to apply and translate their values into action and impact

Needs

- Advanced practical guidance.
- Examples and case studies from practical experience.
- Frameworks intended for improving existing methods and reflection.
- Opportunities to learn across contexts.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants identified a gap between introductory resources and the practical challenges of embedding equity in long-term practice.
- **Questionnaire:** This was reflected in the experience profile:
  - 65% had more than five years' experience.
  - 20% reported regularly supporting others to embed racial equity in their practice.

Persona 3: Change agent

Experience and context

A practitioner and/or researcher who expects to affect the culture, policy or systems of an organisation.

Practice and knowledge

- Works beyond individual engagement activities.
- Advocates for racial equity-focused approaches.
- Navigates institutional barriers and competing priorities.

Goals

- Build organisational commitment to racially equitable engagement.

- Influence colleagues and decision-makers.
- Create sustainable change.

Fears and frustration

- Experience institutional bureaucracy, structural barriers and systemic issues.

Needs

- Evidence to support organisational conversations.
- Guidance for influencing change and managing “difficult” conversations
- Implementation approaches and examples.
- Tools to evaluate progress.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants frequently described challenges gaining institutional support and moving beyond symbolic commitments towards meaningful change.
- **Questionnaire:** Influencing organisational change was the strongest identified learning need:
    - 70% wanted support influencing organisational/institutional change.
    - 35% identified lack of institutional support as a challenge.
    - 30% identified institutional barriers.

Persona 4: Community connector

Experience and context

A member of the community, an organisation, or an individual with hands-on experience facilitating partnerships between universities and the public.

Practice and knowledge

- Brings community knowledge, expertise and lived experience.

- Values reciprocal relationships and shared decision-making.

Goals

- Foster an environment where all stakeholders actively participate as equals in the decision-making process.
- Develop long-term, trust-based relationships with all parties involved
- Set defined boundaries with institutions, researchers, and communities to create mutually beneficial working relationships and clarify roles and expectations.

Fears and frustration

- May have experienced or witnessed extractive and/or tokenistic forms of engagement.
- May often be at a disadvantage in terms of agency, power and privilege within formal/institutional collaborations.

Needs

- Clear expectations and communication.
- Recognition of community expertise.
- Transparent roles and responsibilities.
- Guidance to establish racially equitable partnerships.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants invariably stressed that effective engagement requires trust, reciprocity, transparency and viewing communities as partners, not audiences.
- **Questionnaire:** Community involvement was represented among respondents:
    - 15% identified as community researchers or community partners.
    - Respondents also highlighted the importance of practical strategies and tools to support racially equitable engagement.

03 Current practice and challenges

The scoping review showed that practitioners already use a wide variety of innovative methods to achieve racially equitable public engagement. Yet their efforts usually depend on individual dedication rather than on steady institutional support. Participants explained that they had to think creatively in the face of systems that can hinder equitable practice because of resource constraints, organisational obstacles and the unequal distribution of responsibility and agency.

Existing approaches

Interview participants described a range of approaches already used to promote more equitable public engagement. These approaches are not specific to racial equity; some relate to more general equity work:

- **Outreach that puts the community at the centre:** this involves building relationships within community settings such as faith groups, sports clubs, general practice clinics and book clubs, and working with peer or community researchers rather than asking communities to get involved on university campuses.
- **Set up Community Research Advisory Groups, Communities of Practice** and co-produced charters to maintain ongoing relationships beyond the scope of individual projects or funding cycles.
- **In co-production,** community partners are involved at every stage of the project, from design through implementation and

evaluation, with their lived experience recognised as valuable expertise and decisions shared.

- Offering **informal mentoring** by providing support to colleagues, sharing practical experience and serving as a role model in terms of adopting equitable methods in everyday practice.

- **Making use of institutional frameworks** by appealing to institutional strategies, the requirements of funders, research ethics procedures and equality legislation to promote more equitable methods.

Evidence from scoping questionnaire

- 45% are experimenting with approaches.
- 20% regularly support others.
- 10% regularly embed racial equity.

→ Design considerations for the resource: The resource should be based on current practices, aiding users in developing, modifying and sharing those approaches.

Barriers to racially equitable practice

Although participants cited many examples of equitable good practice, they consistently described obstacles that prevented them from incorporating racial equity in a lasting and meaningful way.

- **Structural and systemic exclusion:** under-representation in leadership, precarious employment affecting practitioners and community partners racialised as minorities, tokenistic commitments following Black Lives Matter, and colonial legacies embedded within research cultures.

- **Institutional bureaucracy:** administrative and financial procedures that reduce flexibility and prevent community-led ways of working.
- **Limited resources and capacity:** time pressures, insufficient funding and engagement budgets being redirected to support other priorities.
- **Resistance from institutions:** lack of commitment on the part of the organisation, misconceptions regarding communities, a passive form of gatekeeping and a reluctance amongst colleagues to take part in discussions about racism.
- **White-centrism and whiteness:** white and/or practitioners racialised as majorities' perspectives, norms and ways of working being treated as the default within research and public engagement; discomfort around naming racism leading to avoidance or deflection; the expectation that practitioners racialised as minorities justify or soften discussions of race; and the burden placed on minoritised staff to challenge racism whilst navigating white fragility and maintaining professional relationships.
- **Emotional labour and backlash:** the emotional demands of creating psychologically safe environments for participants whilst receiving little support for practitioners themselves; balancing professional responsibilities with difficult conversations and public scrutiny; isolation, burnout and compassion fatigue; and the disproportionate burden placed on practitioners racialised as minorities to lead and sustain equity work.

Evidence from scoping questionnaire

- **Interview quotes:**
  - ”If we can’t speak about [racism], then we can’t call it out.” – On the importance of naming racism explicitly and empowering colleagues and allies to do the same.

    - ”You don’t have to be the spokesperson for all individuals from minoritised communities. We are not a monolith; rather, we represent a rich and diverse space with many different experiences.” – On resisting tokenism and the expectation that one individual can represent entire communities.

    - ”We need to create a safe space for our participants, or for the public, and I’m like, what about safe spaces for public engagement professionals? You know, like... we spend so much time on our community, but sometimes we actually lose ourselves in it.” – On the field’s focus on public audiences at the expense of PEP wellbeing and the need for safe spaces for practitioners themselves.

- **Questionnaire biggest challenges**
    - Competing priorities/time: 55%
    - Lack of practical guidance: 45%
    - Lack of institutional support: 35%

→ Design considerations for the resource: While the main obstacles to racially equitable public engagement are systemic and organisational, it is essential to recognise that organisations are composed of individuals with agency. Therefore, individuals share collective responsibility at the micro, meso, and macro levels to tackle these obstacles, depending on their responsibilities and influence. This is why practitioners need practical resources supporting their understanding of their own influence and role in sustaining and expanding racial equity.

04 User needs

The interviews and the questionnaire revealed five user needs which should determine both the content and the structure of the online resource, since together they show a clear move from awareness-raising to providing practical support that enables practitioners to apply racially equitable methods in their daily work.

Some of these needs also reflect a demand to make racially equitable practice easy to implement. However, implementing racial equity effectively has no shortcuts and requires persistent work and a nuanced understanding of social justice theories.

→ Design considerations for the resource: It is essential to thoughtfully incorporate theories of racial justice in a way that resonates with practitioners. To achieve this, a dual approach may be beneficial. We can embed theoretical concepts within practical checklists and actionable items. By integrating theory into practical guidelines, users can engage with complex ideas in a more digestible format. Additionally, there may be instances where a more straightforward approach is necessary. Encouraging practitioners to engage with racial justice, along with wider social justice theories, can deepen their understanding and inspire them to evaluate their practice critically. This could involve targeted sections that highlight key racial justice theories, supplemented with case studies or discussion points that illustrate their real-world applications.

Like the personas, the user needs are design tools, and we will use a more subtle approach in the final resource. They serve as a stepping stone for elaborating the resource's learning objectives.

User need 1: "Help me know what to do."

Participants repeatedly described existing resources as informative but difficult to apply in practice. Rather than more theory, they wanted practical guidance to support decisions before, during and after public engagement activities.

Need x persona: User need 1 is a primary need for the developing practitioner persona and a secondary need for the experienced practitioner persona.

Resource requirement:

- Action-oriented guidance.
- Templates and checklists.
- Worked examples and case studies.
- Decision-support tools.
- Clear next steps for common situations.

Success looks like:
Users can identify what to do next, who to involve, what questions to ask and what to avoid.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants criticised existing resources for being overly theoretical and requested practical tools they could apply immediately.
- **Questionnaire:**
    - 80% would use downloadable checklists and templates. Questionnaire respondents asked for:
        - "Checklists for academics to consult as they are putting together grant applications."
        - "Practical steps to implement to ensure racial equity."
        - "Proven checklists."
    - 55% wanted practical strategies they could apply immediately.
    - 50% wanted adaptable tools and checklists.

    - 45% identified lack of practical guidance as a key challenge.
    - 45% wanted support designing racially equitable engagement activities.
    - 35% wanted support evaluating and improving racially equitable practice.
    - Participants commenting on priorities:
        - “Design of equitable activities.”
        - “Common myths and mistakes to avoid.”
        - “Understanding how race intersects with other elements...”

User need 2: "Help me think differently or more profoundly."

Many practitioners had already realised how important inclusion is and understood DEI dimensions but lacked a deep, specific approach to racial equity. PEPs show interest in moving beyond individual behaviours and better understanding how institutional structures, power and historical inequalities affect public engagement.

Need x persona: User need 2 is a primary need for the experienced practitioner persona and a secondary need for the change agent persona.

Resource requirement:

- Guidance on structural racism and institutional power.
- Prompt for reflection and opportunities for collective reflection
- Practical explanations of key concepts.
- Resources that encourage critical thinking.

Success looks like:
Users can recognise structural barriers to racially equitable engagement, critically reflect on their own assumptions and practice

and redefine success beyond participation numbers towards equity and reciprocity.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants highlighted the need to distinguish systemic racism from individual bias and to move beyond equality-focused approaches towards equity.
    - “In the UK, I would argue, we have a structural kind of racism, in that it’s so, like, inbuilt, so baked in — that it’s often quite invisible, actually.” P02
- **Questionnaire:**
    - Confidence in understanding racial inequity averaged 3.75 out of 5, and confidence in embedding racially equitable practice averaged 3.45 out of 5, suggesting that understanding does not always translate into practice.
    - Participants commenting on priorities:
        - “What racial equity looks like in practice when embedded vs when it is not.”
        - “How this is relevant to public engagement and what difference we can make.”
        - “Understanding how race intersects with other elements…”

User need 3: "Help me have difficult or sensitive conversations."

When practitioners tried to challenge unfair practices or facilitate discussions about race, they often expressed uncertainty. Many wished for practical support for the kinds of situations that occur in day-to-day work.

Need x persona: User need 3 is a primary need for the change agent persona and a secondary need for the experienced practitioner and community connector personas.

Resource requirement:

- Safeguarding strategies
- Conversation starters, scripts and prompts.
- Scenario-based guidance.
- Bystander intervention strategies.
- Facilitation techniques for sensitive discussions.

Success looks like:
Users feel more confident challenging inequitable practice, responding to racist comments or "microaggressions", discussing representation and inclusion, and facilitating conversations with colleagues and community partners.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Requests for practical guidance on difficult conversations emerged consistently across interviews, including discussions with colleagues, managers and community partners.
- **Questionnaire:**
    - 30% wanted a resource to facilitate conversations about racial equity with colleagues.
    - Lack of confidence and skills (25%) and uncertainty about where to start (20%) were also identified as barriers.

User need 4: "Help me influence my institution."

Many practitioners recognised that meaningful change requires more than individual action. They wanted support to influence colleagues, organisational culture and institutional systems.

Need x persona: User need 4 is a primary need for the change agent and community connector personas and a secondary need for the experienced practitioner persona.

Resource requirement:

- Guidance or signposting on mental health, peer support networks, and coping strategies
- Practical approaches for influencing leaders and colleagues.
- Evidence to support organisational conversations.
- Guidance on using institutional policies and frameworks.
- Tools to embed racial equity into strategy and governance.
- Approaches to monitoring progress and accountability.

Success looks like:
Users feel supported and empowered to engage more effectively and confidently in their efforts to promote racially equitable public engagement beyond individual projects.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants described barriers including limited institutional commitment, bureaucracy and competing priorities, alongside the need for stronger organisational leadership.
- **Questionnaire:**
    - 70% identified influencing organisational or institutional change as the highest priority for a new resource.
    - 35% identified lack of institutional support as a key challenge.
    - 30% identified institutional barriers.
    - Participants commenting on priorities:
        - “Need a tangible asset that I can share with sceptical colleagues.”
        - “Influencing organisational and institutional change…”
        - “Accountability audits…”

User need 5: "Help me keep learning."

Participants rejected the idea of a resource that gives definite answers. Instead, they described racially equitable practice as a continuous process of learning, reflection and adaptation.

Users need:

- Opportunities for continued learning.
- Reflective prompts.
- Diverse community perspectives.
- Signposting to additional resources.
- Content that evolves.

Success looks like:
Users return to the resource throughout their practice, using it to reflect, adapt and deepen their understanding as contexts and evidence evolve.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interviews:** Participants repeatedly described anti-racism as an ongoing journey rather than a checklist or a one-off training exercise. They valued resources that encourage reflection, cultural humility and continual improvement.
- **Questionnaire:**
    - 85% expressed interest in providing feedback as the resource develops, demonstrating support for an iterative, evolving approach.
    - Participants commenting on priorities:
        - “A map of all the work completed across the sector already so people don’t have to start from scratch.”
        - “Links to existing outputs from work with different communities…”

05 Guiding design principles and proposed features

The scoping phase produced several guiding design principles to inform development of the online resource. These principles define the approach that should form the basis for developing the resource. The questionnaire responses, in particular, showed that diagnostic tools and access to existing learning and resources that could help practitioners influence their colleagues and institutions were considered important. We have now included these priorities in the design implications listed below. The table below shows how the scoping evidence translates into design decisions.

Guiding design principles table

Guiding principle	Evidence from scoping process	Proposed features	Out of scope
Practical and action-oriented	Participants requested tools they could use in	Structure the resource around real tasks that	Comprehensive theoretical

	their work rather than theoretical content. They emphasised learning by doing and wanted support for real-world situations, including assessing current practice and identifying next steps.	practitioners undertake. Provide checklists, templates, conversation guides, decision tools and worked examples that support action, reflection and continuous improvement.	overviews, lengthy academic discussions or resources designed only for awareness raising or compliance.
Tailored	Practitioners have different roles, confidence levels, responsibilities and positionalities. Participants highlighted different needs, including support for beginners, experienced practitioners, allies, community partners, and those seeking to influence institutional change.	Provide different entry points based on user needs and context. Include resources that support individual practice, conversations with colleagues and wider organisational change, including tools for making the case to decision-makers.	A single linear learning pathway or guidance that assumes all users have the same level of knowledge, confidence or influence, or that all users follow a similar hierarchical approach to learning.
Racial equity-focused	Participants noted how conversations about racial	Explicitly address why intersectionality matters	Develop a broader DEI resource that

	equity and inequity get pushback, challenge or are even avoided.	while still focusing on racial inequity and its historical and systemic origins, while recognising how classism, sexism, ableism and other oppressions intersect.	dilutes racial equity in a general DEI approach.
Community-informed and authentic	Participants valued genuine community partnerships, authentic voices and learning from existing practice. They highlighted the importance of not repeatedly asking communities to share knowledge without building on previous learning.	Include practical, community-specific insights or examples. Co-produce case studies with community partners, practitioner reflections and community-informed examples. Curate and signpost existing resources and learning from across the sector so users can build on previous work rather than starting from scratch.	Information or practices that professionals generate without community input or collaboration. Resources or case studies that do not highlight the work and contributions of community partners in a transparent manner.
Accessible and supportive	Emotional labour, fear of getting things wrong, and	Use plain English, clear navigation and flexible	Specialist academic language, overly

	time pressures were common barriers. Participants highlighted the needs of busy practitioners working within pressured environments.	formats that allow users to find relevant support quickly. Include guidance on difficult conversations, wellbeing, reflection and managing challenges.	complex navigation or resources that present racial equity as a fixed set of answers.

06 Developing and implementing the resource

The scoping identified clear preferences not only for what the resource should contain, but also for how it should be developed. Participants consistently emphasised that developing the resource is as important as its final content. Credibility, authenticity and continued engagement with practitioners and communities should underpin the resource throughout its development.

Development and implementation guidance 1: Develop an authored resource

Participants expressed little enthusiasm for another anonymous toolkit or generic collection of resources. Instead, they wanted a resource that is clearly authored, transparent about whose knowledge it draws on and grounded in practice.

Recommendation

The resource should:

- identify its authors and contributors
- include practitioner reflections and community perspectives
- be transparent about how the content was developed
- acknowledge that there are multiple perspectives and no single "correct" way to embed racial equity.

- guide how to use, attribute and cite the resource equitably and ethically.

Quotes from interviews

- “I’m not particularly interested in another toolkit or something that a bunch of researchers have put together. Because for me, that just is more of the same, and I could just do that myself.”
- “People are individuals, and resources should supplement, not replace, direct conversation.”

These comments suggest that practitioners value credible resources that are authored, transparent and grounded in lived and professional experience, rather than those presented as anonymous or definitive guidance.

Development and implementation guidance 2: Co-develop the resource

Participants described equitable public engagement as something that should be developed collaboratively rather than designed for communities without their involvement.

Recommendation

The resource should be co-developed with:

- public engagement practitioners
- community partners
- people with lived experience
- researchers and sector specialists
- experts working in racial equity.

Co-development should continue throughout drafting, testing and revision rather than ending after the initial consultation.

Evidence from scoping participants

- **Interview:** All interview participants expressed interest in providing feedback during resource development and emphasised the importance of co-production and authentic partnership.
    - On peer reviewers: “Choose your peer reviewers carefully. You want to head off your worst critic — include critical voices early so you can address their objections.”
- **Questionnaire:** 85% of respondents expressed interest in providing feedback during resource development.

Development and implementation guidance 3: Develop a living resource

Participants viewed anti-racist practice as an ongoing process rather than a fixed body of knowledge. They wanted a resource that evolves alongside emerging evidence, practice and community perspectives.

Recommendation

After the development of the resource, the NCCPE should:

- review and update the resource regularly
- incorporate new case studies and examples
- respond to user feedback
- signpost emerging evidence and additional resources.

Rather than presenting definitive answers, the resource should encourage continual reflection and learning.

Implementation priorities

Successful implementation will depend not only on publishing the resource but also on embedding it within existing public engagement practice and supporting its continued use.

- **User testing:** Test prototype content with users representing each persona to ensure the resource is relevant, accessible and practical across different roles and contexts.
- **Multiple formats:** Provide content in accessible digital formats, along with downloadable tools and resources for use during the planning, delivery and evaluation of engagement activities.
- **Integration with practice:** Position the resource as a companion to professional development, project planning, team reflection and organisational learning rather than as a standalone training package.
- **Institutional alignment:** Align the resource with existing institutional processes, including public engagement planning, research ethics, funding applications and organisational strategies where appropriate.
- **Ongoing stewardship:** Establish responsibility for maintaining, updating and reviewing the resource to ensure it remains relevant and reflects evolving evidence and practice.

Evidence from scoping participants

Participants invariably described time pressures and competing priorities. They wanted a resource that was easy to access within existing workflows rather than an additional task. Interviewees also emphasised that meaningful change depends on both organisational support and individual commitment.

07 Success criteria

The success of the resource should be assessed by how well it supports changes in practice in addition to more classic success criteria like downloads or page views. Ultimately, the resource should help practitioners move from intention to action by providing practical, credible and community-informed support that strengthens racially equitable public engagement.

The Resource team's development of the resource does not include conceiving and delivering the evaluation of the resource's implementation and success. However, the success criteria will still be used during the testing phase to assess the resource.

Success criteria table

Success outcome	What success looks like
Supports practical action	Practitioners report using the resource to plan, deliver and evaluate racially equitable public engagement activities and to address real-world challenges.
Builds confidence	Users feel more confident discussing racial equity, facilitating difficult conversations and applying equitable approaches in their own contexts.
Strengthens organisational practice	Practitioners feel they can use the resource to influence colleagues, policies and institutional processes, supporting organisational as well as individual change about racial equity.

08 Limitations and considerations

The document outlined here provides a solid evidence base for developing the online resource. The recommendations are based on the views of practitioners who participated in the interviews and the questionnaire, as well as a review of current practices and available resources. However, several factors should be considered when interpreting the findings and planning the next stage of the work.

Scope of the evidence

The results are based on the evidence that was available at the scoping stage. Although the interviews yielded substantial qualitative insights, the questionnaire received only 20 responses, so the quantitative findings must be seen as indicative rather than fully representative of the wider public engagement sector. A strength of the scoping exercise was the convergence between the interview and questionnaire findings, both of which consistently highlighted similar priorities, challenges and resource needs.

Development capacity

Due to project delays and less-than-expected available support, certain planned scoping and development work was affected. Consequently, the recommendations in this document should be seen as a prioritised initial framework and not a full specification of the resource.

Implications for delivery

The ambition outlined in this scoping document is the preferred course of development for the resource, but achieving it will depend on the amount of time, funding and capacity available during the development phase.

It may be necessary to reduce the scope of work within available resources and optimise available time, energy and resources. The next stage of resource development is the blueprint stage, which will decide the overall concept and structure of the resource and help us prioritise which content we will develop. We will prioritise through consultation with PEPs, the working group, the IAG-RE, and the NCCPE directorate.

Any further scope refinement should still be based on user needs and the guiding principles established in this scoping phase.

Appendix

Appendix A: Scoping methodology

Appendix B: Interview participants

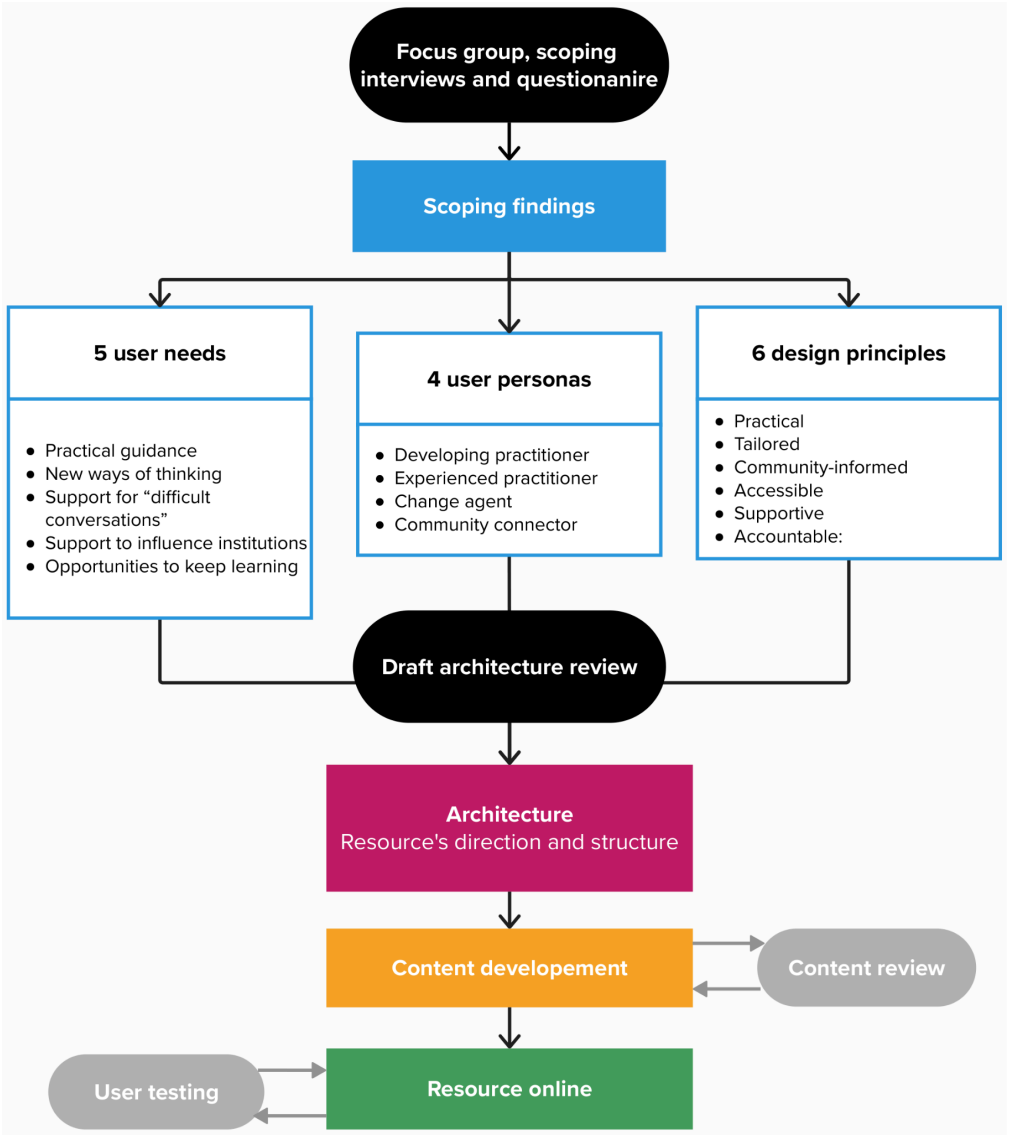
Appendix C: Questionnaire summary

Appendix A: Scoping methodology

Aim

To understand the needs of practitioners and inform the development of an online resource to support racially equitable public engagement.

How is the scoping incorporated in the overall resource development process?



The project uses an iterative methodology, engaging the working group and PEPs throughout the development process to ensure the resource is relevant, practical, and responsive to user needs. Rather than relying on single-point consultation, the resource will be developed through successive cycles of discovery, design, refinement, and validation.

- **Development stage 1: Scoping**
  The first stage will establish the scope and direction of the resource by identifying PEPs' needs, priorities and success criteria.

- **Development stage 2: Blueprint/Architecture**
  Using the approved scoping document, the resource team will develop a draft resource blueprint describing the resource's overall concept and structure.

- **Development stage 3: Content development**
  After the blueprint is approved, the project team will develop the resource in line with the agreed learning design, module architecture and interaction model.

- **Development stage 4: User testing and final refinement**
  The completed prototype will be evaluated with the NCCPE, the working group and PEPs to assess its usability, relevance, and effectiveness in supporting the intended learning outcomes.

Data collection

Method	Participants	Purpose
Semi-structured interviews	13 practitioners	Explore experiences, challenges and resource needs in depth.
Online questionnaire	20 practitioners	Validate and prioritise themes emerging from the interviews.

Participants
Participants represented a range of roles including Public Engagement Professionals, research advisors, academics, PPI leads, community

researchers, lived experience advisors and staff working across universities, the NHS, charities and community organisations.

Analysis

We analysed interview transcripts and questionnaire responses together using an inductive thematic approach. We developed themes iteratively and refined them by comparing the two datasets. We used questionnaire findings to validate, strengthen and prioritise themes identified in the interviews.

Evidence mapping

Theme	Interviews	Questionnaire
User personas	✓	✓
Practical guidance	✓	✓
Difficult conversations	✓	✓
Institutional barriers	✓	✓
Community partnerships	✓	Limited
Authored resource	✓	–
Living resource	✓	✓

Use of AI

Artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted transcription software generated transcripts of the semi-structured interviews. The team reviewed all transcripts against the original recordings and corrected them as needed before analysis. AI supported the transcription process only. The Resource team undertook the coding, interpretation and thematic analysis of the interview data. It integrated the interview and questionnaire findings to develop the themes and recommendations presented in this scoping document.

Appendix B: Interview participants

Participant	Organisation	Primary role
Participant 01	Health research organisation	Research advisor
Participant 02	University	PEP
Participant 03	Health research organisation	Community partner recruiter
Participant 04	University	Researcher
Participant 05	University	Professor
Participant 06	Community organisation	Community contributors
Participant 07	Higher education	Lecturer
Participant 08	University	PEP Lead
Participant 09	University	PPI Lead
Participant 10	University	PEP
Participant 11	University	Community Engagement Practitioner
Participant 12	University	PEP
Participant 13	Higher education organisation	PEP

Appendix C: Questionnaire summary

Respondent profile

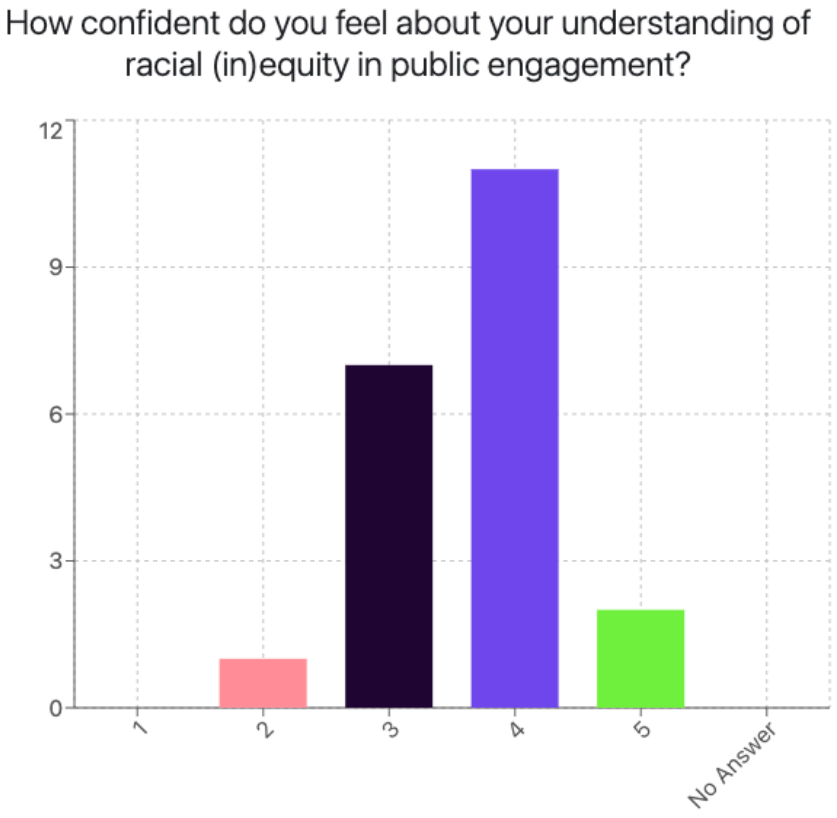
- n=20
- 95% say public engagement is their main or significant role
- 65% >5 years' experience
- 85% involved in strategic planning

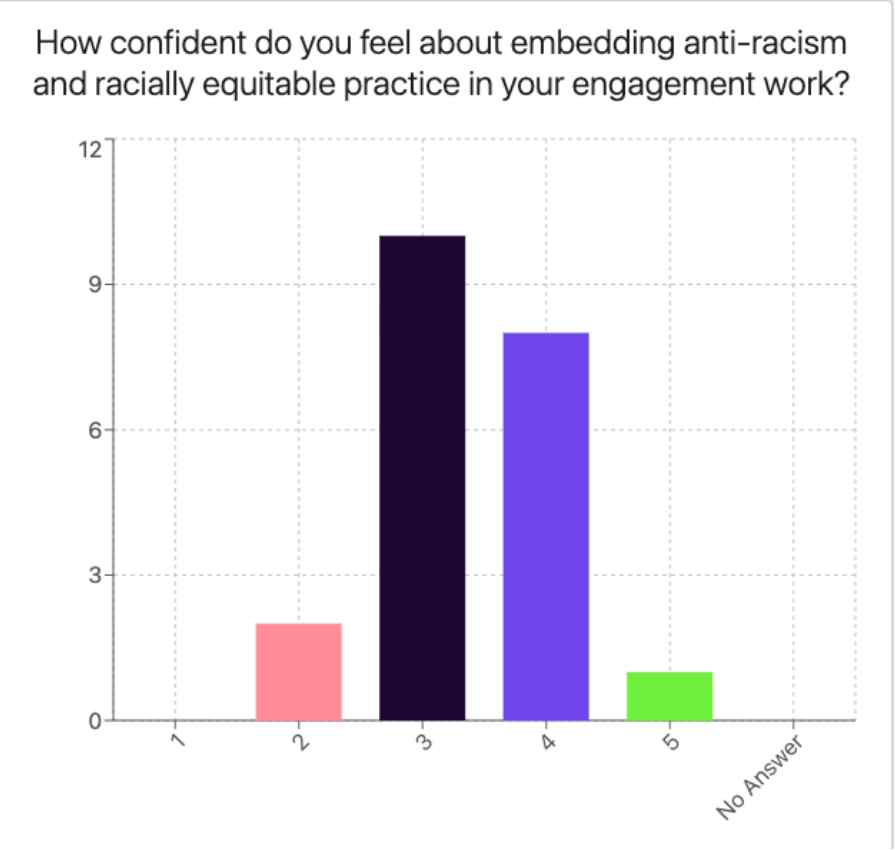
Which best describes your involvement with public engagement?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
Public engagement is my main/full-time role	9	45.00%
Public engagement is a significant part of my role	10	50.00%
Public engagement is a small part of my role	1	5.00%
Public engagement is not part of my role	0	0.00%

What is your current role?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
I work in a higher education institution	9	45.00%
I work with higher education institutions	3	15.00%
I work with a higher education funder	0	0.00%
I am an academic / researcher	1	5.00%
I am a community researcher / a community partner	3	15.00%
I am a student	0	0.00%
I am a freelancer / self-employed	1	5.00%
No answer	1	5.00%
Other	7	35.00%

Where are you based?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
England	18	45.00%
Scotland	0	0.00%
Wales	0	0.00%
Northern Ireland	0	0.00%
Overall UK	2	15.00%

Confidence levels





Highest priorities

- Organisational change: 70%
- Designing equitable engagement: 45%
- Evaluation: 35%

Which areas would help you most in a new resource? ***Please choose up to two options.***		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
Getting started with racially equitable practice	5	25.00%
Understanding racial equity concepts and terminology	1	5.00%
Designing racially equitable public engagement activities	9	45.00%
Evaluating and improving racially equitable practice	7	35.00%
Influencing organisational or institutional change	14	70.00%
Other	3	15.00%

Biggest challenges

- Competing priorities/time: 55%
- Lack of practical guidance: 45%
- Lack of institutional support: 35%

What are the three biggest challenges you face in embedding racial equity in your engagement work?		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
Lack of practical guidance	9	45.00%
Competing priorities/time	11	55.00%
Lack of institutional support	7	35.00%
Institutional barriers	6	30.00%
Resistance from colleagues	3	15.00%
Not enough peer support	4	20.00%
Lack of confidence/skills	5	25.00%
Unclear where to start	4	20.00%
Other	4	20.00%

Resource design

Open answers to **"If you had to pick one key aspect for the resource to address first, what would it be and why?"**:

- A diagnostic tool - need a tangible asset that I can share with sceptical colleagues
- Links to existing outputs from work with different communities [...]
- Checklists for academics to consult as they are putting together grant applications would be very helpful!
- What racial equity looks like in practice when embedded, vs when it is not
- How this is relevant to public engagement and what difference we can make
- As an intersectional practitioner, I believe that race is one of many elements that require attention when developing equitable resources

and therefore understanding how it intersects with other elements seems relevant

- ”Workforce development and implementation of Equitable policies and procedures enabling both diagnosis of employee issues and design of solutions deeper into the organisation.
- Full-blown accountability audits developed from checklists and templates assessing compliance with statutory requirements: ie Public Sector Equality Duty; Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance Updated 13 April 2023 ”
- Design of equitable activities
- Checklist
- Checklists, templates
- Standard consistent language to understand racial equity
- Engagement with the resources with busy, tired and overstretched education practitioners
- Practical steps to implement to ensure racial equity
- Common myths and mistakes to avoid
- A map of all the work completed across the sector already so people don’t have to start from scratch
- Proven checklists
- Self-assessment tools to first assess the level that is or is not being embedded.
- Influencing organisational and institutional change. [...]
- How to really assess your own practice in order to get started
- Build motivation and confidence to challenge the system.

Analysis of “If you had to pick one key aspect for the resource to address first, what would it be and why?”	
Key theme	**Core request and format**
Diagnostic and audit	Checklists, self-assessments, templates, statutory accountability audits
Practical implementation	Step-by-step guides, ”embedded vs. non-embedded” comparisons, common pitfalls
Proof and sector mapping	Sector-wide work mapping, links to community-led outputs

Foundations and concepts	Standardised language/glossary, intersectional frameworks (race + other identities)
Systemic organisational change	Workforce development policies, confidence-building tools

Highest Demand:
The most pressing needs include #1 "Help me know what to do," and #4 "Help me influence my institution." Responses tend to cluster around two goals: immediate execution and fostering institutional change. Tools that serve as both daily guides and sources of shareable evidence will be the most beneficial.

Bridge for Needs:
To address the needs of #2 "Help me think differently or more profoundly," and #3 "Help me have difficult or sensitive conversations,".

Which areas would help you most in a new resource? Please choose up to <u>two</u> options.		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**
Getting started with racially equitable practice	5	25.00%
Understanding racial equity concepts and terminology	1	5.00%
Designing racially equitable public engagement activities	9	45.00%
Evaluating and improving racially equitable practice	7	35.00%
Influencing organisational or institutional change	14	70.00%
Other	3	15.00%

Which features would make you most likely to use this resource? Please choose up to <u>two</u> options.		
Answer	**Count**	**Percentage**

Modular navigation	7	35.00%
Short, plain-language sections	11	55.00%
Options to download or print tools	12	60.00%
Multiple formats (video, text, audio)	4	20.00%
Not sure	0	0.00%
Other	2	10.00%