



**LET'S  
ROOT  
OUT  
RACISM**

## LET'S ROOT OUT RACISM

As a Union we will not tolerate any of our members being subjected to unfair or discriminatory treatment because of their race, ethnic background or nationality. Any member who feels they are being treated unfairly in this way will have the advice and support of the Union in pursuing their case.

As providers of public services our members have a special responsibility to ensure that all of the clients and customers of those public services are treated equally in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the schemes and programmes they seek to access. Nobody should be treated differently because of their race, ethnic background or nationality.

## PSEU SURVEY 2012

During 2012 a Union survey of members revealed, amongst other things, that of the respondents in the past year:

- **3.5%** reported being the subject of discrimination in the workplace based on race
- **4.5%** reported witnessing a colleague being the subject of discrimination in the workplace based on race
- **7%** reported witnessing a client\customer being subjected to racist remarks or behaviour
- **26%** witnessed racist remarks by colleagues about clients\customers

On the publication of our survey, the Immigrant Council of Ireland said:

“*The fact that over 26% of PSEU members surveyed have witnessed colleagues making racist remarks, should be a wake up call if we are to make the 17% of us born outside Ireland feel welcome.*”

## ANALYSIS OF RACIST INCIDENTS REPORTED TO THE IMMIGRANT COUNCIL OF IRELAND

In a recent analysis of reports of racism to the Council, 13.3% of incidents were reported to occur while people were accessing Government, Community or Customer services. The Council states that this finding “*indicates that a significant number of public servants responsible for supporting and protecting the public were actually perpetrators of racist discrimination.*”

## WHAT IS RACISM?

Racism is a specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by cultural and ethnic minorities. It is experienced by a range of groups in Ireland including Travellers, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and Jews and Muslims in the form of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. The myths relating to the hierarchy of races that underpinned slavery and colonialism, among other historic ills, have

been debunked but social racism still exists in many societies, including Ireland.

The manifestation of social racism includes: threats, verbal abuse, graffiti, property damage, spitting, hate mail, name calling, insults, discrimination, harassment, and so forth.

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2012 deal with discrimination within employment on nine grounds, including race and membership of the Traveller community. The race ground refers to different race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins. The Equal Status Acts 2000-2012 deal with discrimination in the context of service delivery on the same grounds. It is important to note that the legal context in which 'race' is used is based on an intention to protect against racial discrimination. The EU 'Race' Directive (2000/43/EC) rejects theories which attempt to determine the existence of separate human races.

## ***SO, WHAT SHOULD A MEMBER DO IF THEY ENCOUNTER RACIST BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THEMSELVES IN THE WORKPLACE?***

Sweeping racism under the carpet will not make racism disappear. The only effective way to deal with racism is to acknowledge and deal with it. If you feel you are being treated unfairly because of your race, ethnic origin or nationality you should:

- Ask your employer for a copy of their workplace equal opportunity & diversity policy.
- Keep written records of all incidents including dates, times and the nature and details of each incident. This will be important if you subsequently make a formal complaint.
- Write down your feelings and response at the time of each incident. This will be important if you subsequently make a formal complaint.
- Make it clear to any individual making racist remarks that you object to their behaviour and find it unacceptable.
- Keep copies of any correspondence you issue as well as any written replies. This will be important if you subsequently make a formal complaint.
- If possible get witnesses to the behaviour.
- Your local PSEU representative may be able to assist you but they cannot make the complaint for you.
- Stick strictly to the facts when making a written or verbal complaint.

## ***WHAT SHOULD A MEMBER DO IF THEY ENCOUNTER RACIST BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS OTHERS IN THE WORKPLACE?***

It is quite possible that members encounter colleagues making racist remarks about other people, including customers of public services. Indeed, our PSEU survey suggests it is quite likely.

Nobody should be expected to quietly acquiesce while colleagues voice their prejudices in the workplace and silence in the face of such behaviour can tend to lead the perpetrator into believing

that their offensive attitude is acceptable.

We will not accept people treating us unfairly at work because of our race, ethnic origin or nationality and we should not accept that customers of our Departments or Offices should be the subject of remarks or behaviour on the same grounds.

If you encounter someone making what you consider to be offensive remarks in the workplace do not stay silent.

Make it clear that those sort of comments are offensive to most people and unwelcome in the workplace.

Tell the perpetrator that you do not want to hear anything like that again.

If the response is negative repeat yourself – *“Those comments are unacceptable to me and I do not want to hear them again. Those remarks are not acceptable in the workplace.”*

Ask a manager or supervisor to raise the issue with the individual concerned on your behalf. An informal approach may well be enough to make a person aware that his or her behavior is causing offence.

If the behavior persists you should consider making a formal complaint to your manager or supervisor.

## IN CONCLUSION

Racism is something with which Irish people are all too familiar. Prejudice against Irish people is part and parcel of our history. Given that historical background makes it all the more incredible that we can have people who believe it is acceptable to be prejudiced against others simply because of their race, skin colour, ethnic origin or nationality.

**LET US ALL TREAT RACISM AS A NOXIOUS WEED AND ROOT IT OUT!**

**PSEU**

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**THE EQUALITY AUTHORITY**  
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