

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## 1. Introduction

The **Sheffield People's Assembly on Race Equality** took place at **Ellesmere Children's Centre** and brought together **47 participants** from across the city, supported by a facilitation and organising team of community practitioners and partners.

The Assembly was designed as a **structured, community-led space** for reflection, dialogue, and action on race equality in Sheffield, four years on from the **Race Equality Commission (2022)**. It created opportunities for participants to engage with evidence, share lived experiences, and discuss priorities for change across key areas including **education, policing, health, employment and community life**.

### Facilitation and Support

The facilitation team consisted of: Led by **Moussa, Ruth, Roger, Ronnie, Dean, Olive** (supporting the Collective Agreement and Healing Space), **Lungani, Sharon, Ruby & Ekli** (from the Brixton Assembly) and **Anwar**, with additional support from **two staff members from Ellesmere Children's Centre**.

**Alongside this team, Lungani and Rahoul also took responsibility for filming, photography, and short interviews throughout the day**, helping to document the Assembly and capture participant voices.

The team worked collaboratively to ensure the Assembly was **safe, inclusive, well-paced and grounded in community values**.

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## Format and Activities:

The Assembly followed a **deliberative structure**, moving through:

1. **Keynote inputs and cultural contributions** to set context, ground participants, and honour community experience.
2. **Engagement with evidence**, including findings from the Sheffield Race Equality desktop review.
3. **Structured small-group discussions** exploring:
  - Lived experiences of racial inequality
  - Systemic and institutional barriers
  - Community priorities for change
  - Short- and medium-term proposals for action
4. **Collective Agreement and Healing Space**, supporting emotional safety and respectful dialogue throughout.
5. **Whole-group report-back**, enabling each table to share reflections and recommendations.

Participants engaged critically and constructively with the material, identifying shared concerns and alignment across communities and sectors.

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## 2. Findings from Community Discussions-Three Rounds

### 2.1 Experience & Diagnosis: Where Things Stand

Across the five tables, discussions revealed a strong consensus:

#### A. Promises Perceived as Undelivered

Participants widely described the REC as **well-intentioned but performative**, citing:

- Lack of visible follow-through
- Slow or absent implementation
- A pattern described as: “review > report > fanfare > inaction.”

#### B. Key Inequality Themes Identified

- **Health:** mistrust, stigma, culturally unsafe services, barriers to mental-health support
- **Education:** disproportionate exclusions, parent exclusion from decision-making
- **Policing & Justice:** racial profiling, harsher sentencing, over-surveillance
- **Employment & Business:** limited access to procurement, funding and leadership roles
- **Governance:** power concentrated among institutions; community voices sidelined.

#### C. Systemic Issues:

Participants highlighted:

- Lack of representation in senior leadership
- Weak accountability mechanisms
- Data inconsistently collected, missing or weaponised to delay action
- Institutional cultures that reproduce bias, described by some as “colonial behaviours”

#### D. Impact on Communities

The consequences of inaction included:

- Erosion of trust
- Growing disillusionment and fatigue
- Fragmentation and absence of sustained progress
- Continued economic, social and educational exclusion

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## 3. What Needs to Change

Participants articulated a clear and cohesive framework for systemic and cultural change.

### 3.1 Core Principles for a New Model

- **Accountability before rhetoric**
- **Community-led decision-making**, shifting power, not just consulting
- **Equity as a central organising principle**
- Recognition that **racial justice benefits everyone**.

### 3.2 Recommended Practices

- Embed race equality across all policy, strategy and resourcing decisions
- Co-create solutions with communities from the beginning
- Combine data with lived experience to inform action
- Introduce **quarterly progress check-ins** with publicly shared updates.

### 3.3 Structural Changes Needed

- Establish community-led **scrutiny and oversight structures**
- Implement **participatory budgeting** and inclusive procurement
- Expand **trauma-informed approaches** across services
- Increase leadership representation across sectors.

### 3.4 Tensions Identified

Participants debated the role of:

- Working **within** institutions to drive reform
- Building **independent community power** outside of them Most agreed **both strategies** will be required.

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## 4. Action & Alliances (3–18 Months)

### 4.1 Priority Actions

- Launch regular **community assemblies** for ongoing accountability
- Build a permanent network for **coordinated action**
- Establish a **community-led monitoring framework** tracking race-equality commitments
- Develop **youth assemblies**, leadership programmes and civic training
- Introduce **quarterly institutional performance reviews**

### 4.2 Alliance-Building

Strengthen cross-sector partnerships between:

- Community organisations
- Faith groups
- Businesses
- Civil society bodies
- International partners

### 4.3 Political and Economic Strategy

- Mobilise **strategic voting blocs**
- Secure public commitments from candidates and parties
- Apply economic pressure through **consumer power** and collective spending choices

### 4.4 Community-Led Solutions

- Invest in community-owned economic initiatives
- Scale existing grassroots projects
- Share knowledge and resources to avoid duplication

### 4.5 Intergenerational Commitment

- Embed young people's voices in decision-making
- Expand mentoring and development pathways
- Build confidence, identity and leadership for long-term empowerment

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## 5. Risks & Challenges

Participants identified key risks:

- Community burnout
- Fragmentation without coordination
- Repetition of short-term initiatives lacking sustainability

## 6. Conclusion

The Assembly surfaced a powerful blend of **frustration and determination**. While trust in institutional processes is low, community belief in **collective action** is strong.

Participants are clear:

- Sheffield must shift from consultation to co-creation
- From promises to accountability
- From fragmented efforts to coordinated power

As one participant stated:

**“We have to be the solution ourselves.”**

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



## Appendix: Key Research Findings

### Race Equality in Sheffield: Are We Making Progress?

Four years after Sheffield's Race Equality Commission (REC) called for systemic change, the picture is mixed. The city has strengthened governance—adopting Equality Objectives for 2024–2028 and committing to annual equality reporting—so there is now a clearer framework for tracking change across services than at the time of the REC launch.

But across the outcomes that matter to residents—education, policing and justice, health, housing and the local economy—publicly available evidence **shows limited, uneven progress**, with some indicators pointing to stagnation or regression.

**Education:** Permanent exclusions in Sheffield have risen in recent years and, by spring term 2023/24, were **higher than the national average** (0.06 per 100 pupils versus 0.04 nationally). Local documentation highlights **disproportionate impacts** on Roma and Black pupils, underlining the urgency of targeted action and transparent monitoring.

The city is developing an exclusions strategy, but ethnicity-disaggregated attainment for Sheffield is not yet consolidated in a single public report—data exist within Department for Education platforms and can be extracted locally to illuminate gaps and drive targeted support.

**Policing & justice:** Disproportionality in **stop and search** remains a consistent concern. Nationally, Black people were stopped at **24.5 per 1,000** compared with **5.9 per 1,000** for White people (year ending March 2023). In **South Yorkshire**, local data shows Black residents formed **4.7%** of all stops in 2023, while comprising **under 2%** of the population.

Moreover, national data still record a high “**ethnicity unknown**” rate (around one in five stops), which makes local accountability harder. These figures support the case for a published force-level dashboard for Sheffield—reporting stop rates by ethnicity and aiming to reduce “unknown ethnicity” to **≤10%** within a year—alongside community scrutiny.

# SHEFFIELD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY ON RACE EQUALITY

Summary Findings & Recommendations March 2026



**Hate crime:** Race remains the largest strand. In **2022/23**, South Yorkshire recorded **4,366** hate crimes, with race-motivated offences making up roughly two-thirds, mirroring the national pattern in which the majority of police-recorded hate crimes are racial in nature. Improving **victim experience** and the **quality and consistency** of recording should remain priorities, given that changes in recording practices can also influence the totals seen in public dashboards.

**Health:** The NHS Race & Health Observatory and the King's Fund have set out practical levers for reducing ethnic health inequalities—representative leadership, better data capture and transparency, and stronger engagement. Locally, providers have begun to produce population-health and inequalities reports, but many still **flag incomplete recording of protected characteristics**, limiting the city's ability to publish routine **ethnicity-disaggregated dashboards** for access, waits, outcomes, or **Mental Health Act** detentions. The priority here is straightforward: publish quarterly dashboards with **≥95% ethnicity completeness** as a near-term target.

**Employment & graduate outcomes:** We lack a unified, city-level picture of ethnicity in employment and pay. Nationally accredited **Graduate Outcomes** data exist by **provider and ethnicity** for Sheffield's universities and can be combined to create a Sheffield-specific view of employment, further study and salary medians by ethnicity. Regionally, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority offers a practical model for **ethnicity pay-gap and representation reporting** that Sheffield public bodies could adopt collectively.

**Bottom line:** The REC was a turning point in Sheffield's conversation on race equity. Today, the city has stronger structures in place, but demonstrable improvements in outcomes are not yet clear.

To change that, partners should adopt a **Race Equality Data Dashboard** covering: **exclusions and attainment by ethnicity; stop & search** (with low "unknown"); **health access/outcomes including MHA detentions; housing allocations/overcrowding; and employment/pay-gap and graduate outcomes.**

With these metrics published and reviewed every six to twelve months, Sheffield can move from **statements of intent to measurable, shared progress.**