



The Cost of Exclusion: Project Insights

Findings, Learnings, and Next Steps

Peer Research Project by Communicate Inclusively CIC, Atlyn Forde - CEO

‘The Cost of Exclusion’ peer research project explored how systemic discrimination, bias, and exclusion affect the lives of Black women in Ealing and beyond.

Aim: To understand the financial, social, health and wellbeing impacts of workplace exclusion for Black women, and to develop actionable recommendations for employers to create inclusive, equitable workplaces.



Research Methods

- Peer research:** Black women with lived experience led the research.
- Quantitative:** Survey of 33 respondents, analysing barriers, impacts, and employment decisions.
- Qualitative:** Four in-depth interviews, transcribed and thematically analysed.

Key Learnings

- Peer-led research builds trust:** participants shared openly because of shared lived experience.
- Intersectionality matters:** racism, sexism, and caring responsibilities combine to create unique barriers.
- Impacts are systemic and long-term:** exclusion affects not just work but health, finances, housing, and family.

Participants
Black women living in and around the borough of Ealing who have experienced racism, bias, or exclusion in the workplace.

What we did:

- Analysed the data thematically and compared it with UK research (Fawcett Society, McKinsey, tribunal cases).
- Produced a detailed report with charts, case studies, recommendations, and references.

Insights revealed

- Discrimination often hides in everyday processes (work allocation, meetings, performance reviews).
- Black women carry extra emotional labour managing bias on top of their actual roles.
- Exclusion is cumulative, not isolated.

"I thought I was having a heart attack — the stress was that bad."

"After sickness leave, my portfolio had disappeared."

"Raising a grievance made me a 'problem'; I was shut out."

"I ensured others were paid—then my own pay was delayed."



Key Findings

- 77%** reported discrimination or bias as a barrier.
- 75%** reported loss of confidence/self-worth; **58%** mental health challenges.
- Women described exclusion from meetings, undermining after leave, and harsher standards.
- Case studies highlighted delayed or denied pay/bonus, burnout, and reproductive health impacts.
- Grievance processes often retraumatized participants, with no support afterwards.

Systemic Changes Needed

- Inclusive processes**
- Structural flexibility**
- Trauma-informed support**
- Voice & representation**
- Embedding accountability**
- External partnerships**



- Embedding accountability:** link manager appraisals and bonuses to equity outcomes.
- Inclusive processes:** role reintegration after leave, diverse grievance and promotion panels.
- Voice & representation:** advisory groups of Black women and other under-represented groups to co-design policies.
- Trauma-informed support:** counselling, independent mediators, safe reporting channels.
- Structural flexibility:** flexible work as default, childcare and wellbeing benefits, travel cost relief.
- External partnerships:** work with Communicate Inclusively and other consultancies for training, audits, and independent oversight.

SUPPORT NEEDED

- Resourcing:** funding to scale peer research and inclusive training programmes.
- Capacity:** dedicated time for peer researchers to engage and analyse.
- Advocacy:** support from local authority and anchor institutions to embed findings.
- Partnerships:** collaboration with employers and HR leaders to pilot interventions.



Actions & Impact

IMPACT GOALS

- Reduce attrition and sickness rates for Black women.
- Improve representation and progression of Black women in leadership.
- Reduce health inequalities linked to workplace exclusion.
- Create a borough-wide model for systemic change that can be scaled nationally.