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# SHADES of BIAS

Reflective case study template

**REVEAL > REFLECT > REPAIR**



# My Social Work background

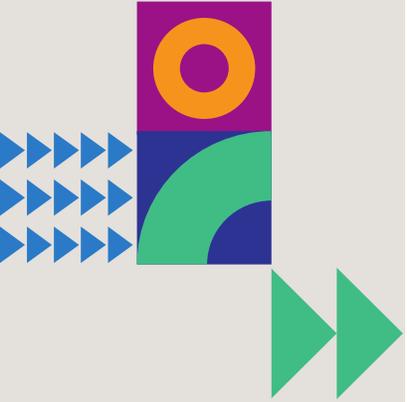
- Professional Officer & Social Worker (*BASW*)
- Anti-racism Visionary (*BASW*)
- Supervising Social Worker (*private fostering Social Work*)
- Young Person's Advisor (*supporting care leavers*)
- Duty & Assessment Officer (*child protection*)
- Adult Mental Health Officer (*community support / intervention*)
- Youth Offending Service Officer (*court work & community intervention*)
- Probation Services Officer (*intensive supervision & surveillance*)
- Placements Officer (*private fostering administration*)



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# The British Association of Social Workers (BASW)



- BASW is the professional association for Social Workers in the UK (established in 1970).
- We are a member-led organisation which promotes Social Work, the interests of those working within the profession and people who use services.
- We have over 22,000 members and we have teams in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- We are the strong independent voice of Social Work and Social Workers.

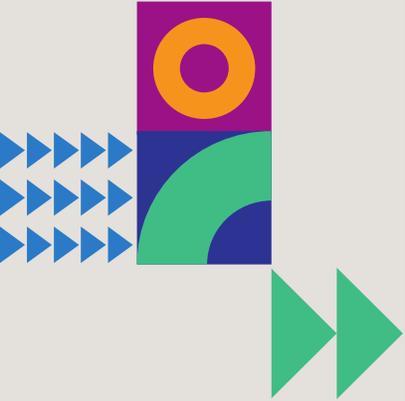
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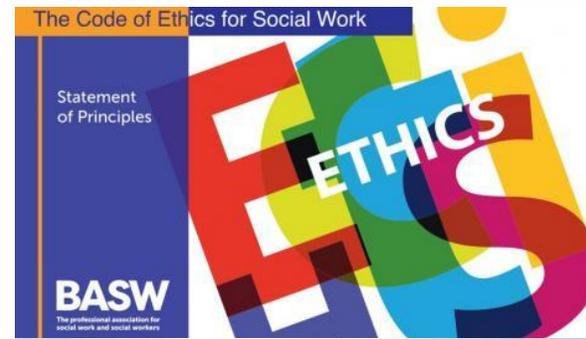


# BASW England workstreams

- Code of Ethics for Social Work
- The Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)
- Collaboration with employers, education providers, service-user groups and other stakeholders
- Specialist national thematic groups (children & families; adults; mental health; criminal justice; students and NQSW's and professional development)
- An established network of BASW branches nationwide
- Events, conferences & webinars
- Policy & research activities
- Liaison with the regulator Social Work England

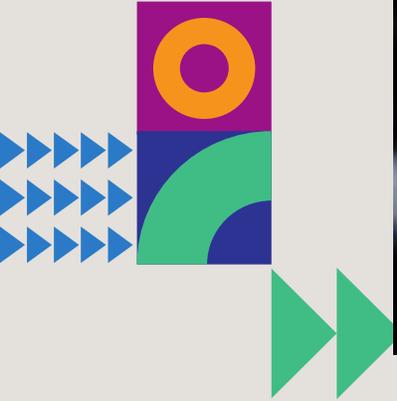
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## BASW quick weblinks

- Promo video
- Membership types are listed here
- BASW events webpage
- Join BASW online here

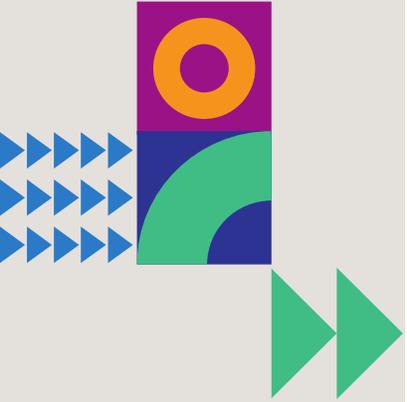


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- Parliamentary work with MP's and civil servants
- Training, CPD and career development
- Social Workers' Union (trade union advice and representation)
- National consultation responses, campaigns and lobbying activities
- Black & Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS)
- Raising the profile of Social Work on various media platforms (TV, radio, print, online etc)
- Promote 'collective professional identity'





# What to expect

- What is Shades of Bias (SoB)?
- What are the origins of SoB?
- How can SoB be utilised more widely?
- The section for people responsible for the bias: *accountability, growth & self-reflection*
- Summary & infographics
- SoB exemplars (interactive activity)
- Relevant BASW England workstreams, frameworks and resources
- Questions

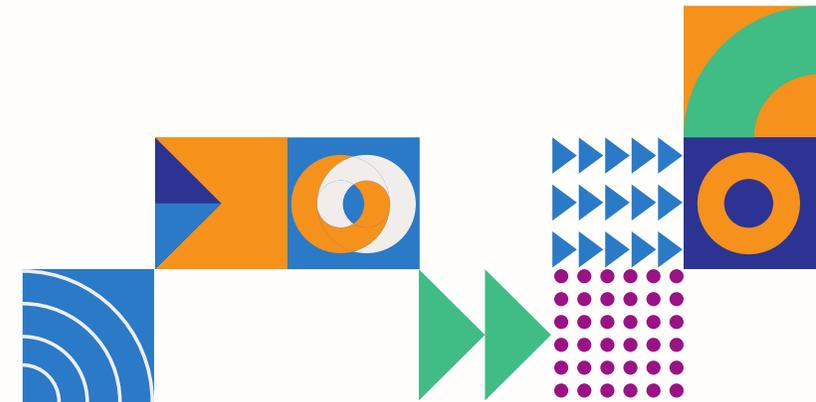


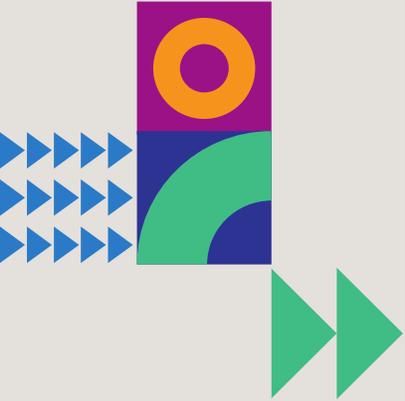
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# What is Shades of Bias (SoB)?

Shades of Bias (SoB) is a versatile case study template designed to enable critical reflection on how discrimination, oppression and racism manifests in social work and beyond. It is a simple process for documenting, analysing and addressing instances of bias, whether it is experienced directly, observed or perpetrated (by the person/people responsible). SoB embraces intersectionality and is underpinned by the protected characteristics (age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion etc) of the author (as per the Equality Act 2010). The template also captures more nuanced and multi-layered discrimination such as: classism, microaggressions, neurodiversity, sexism etc. Based on anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist values and ethics, SoB helps to create a culture of accountability, inclusion, self-expression and systemic change.

SoB is more than just a tool for documenting racism. It is a multidimensional framework for healing, self-examination and transformation across policy, practice and education. SoB provides cathartic and therapeutic benefits, which empowers people to analyse and respond to experiences of bias and various forms of discrimination. By validating lived experiences, SoB is both a self-help resource and practical tool, giving it unique emotional and strategic functions aimed at hearts and minds. It is intended for SoB to become *the* standardised framework for documenting discrimination and exposing harmful systemic patterns that are often ignored.

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## bias

*noun*

UK /ˈbaɪ.əs/ US /ˈbaɪ.əs/

**bias** *noun* (PREFERENCE)

Add to word list

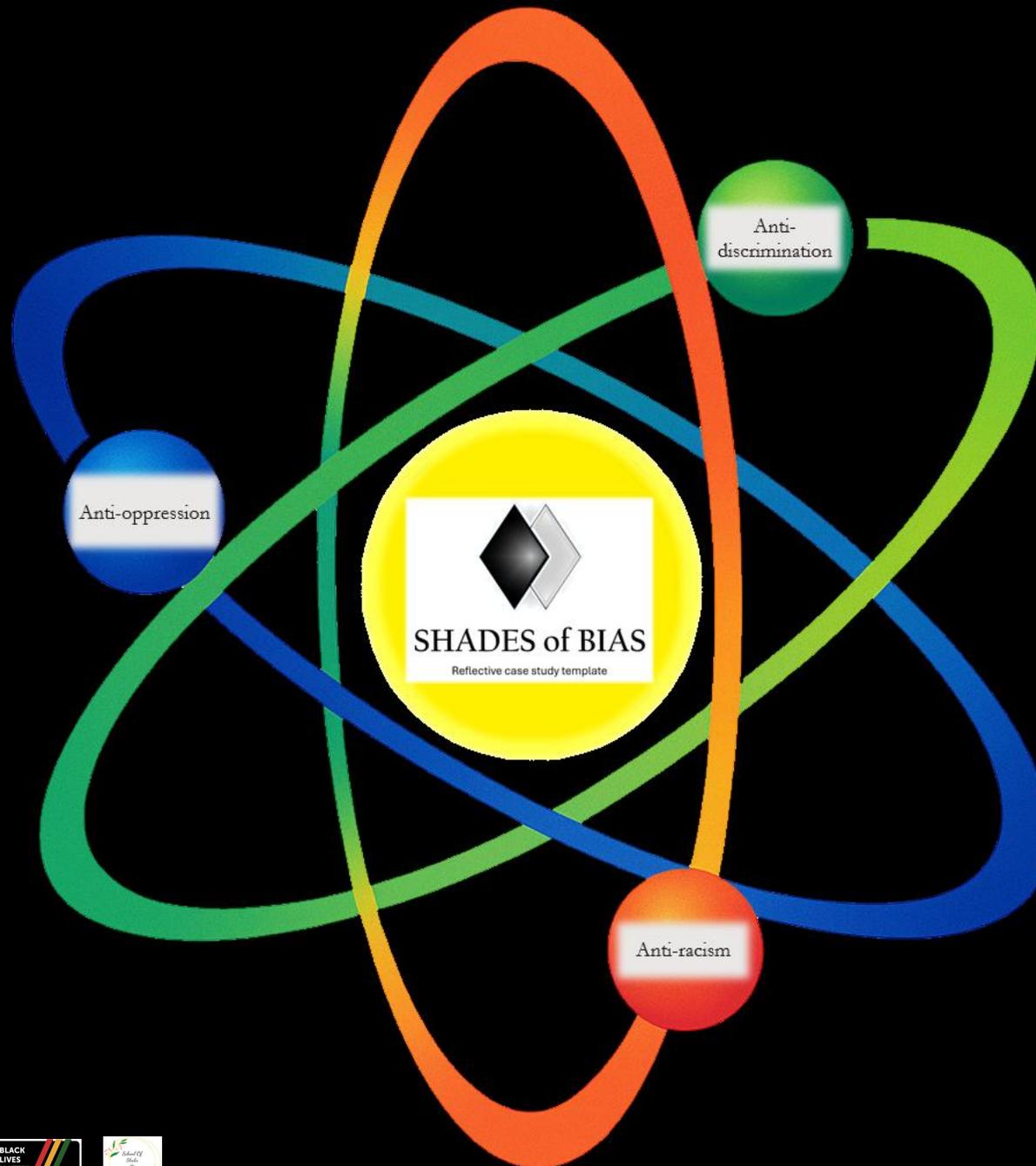
**C2** [C usually singular, U]

**the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment:**



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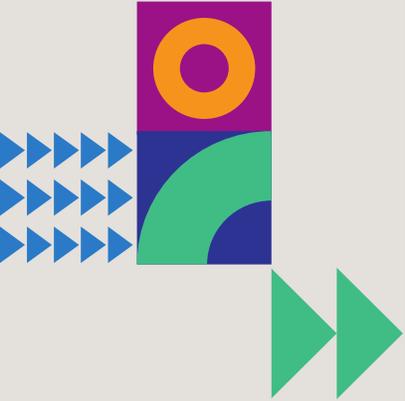


SoB serves 3 different groups:

**A. Victims/survivors of discrimination/oppresion/racism: *Cathartic and therapeutic***

For people who have experienced discrimination/oppresion/racism, SoB offers a way to process and validate their experiences - reducing the fear of dismissal or gaslighting. Writing about these incidents can help release emotional distress, allowing people to articulate their feelings in a constructive way. It helps victims/survivors make sense of what happened, recognise patterns of discrimination and regain a sense of control over the narrative. By documenting their experiences, individuals can create a tangible record of injustice, which can be used to seek accountability, support and/or systemic change. This approach reduces isolation, as individuals see their experiences reflected in broader structural patterns, rather than as personal failures or isolated incidents.

It is imperative that victims/survivors of discrimination/oppresion/racism access appropriate wellbeing **networks** (such as BASW England's Mentoring Service, Professional Support Service, the Anti-Racist Movement or local peer support groups) and/or relevant **wellbeing resources** (such as: the Relational & Anti-racist supervision template, Eligibility for Advice and Representation Guidance, Professional working conditions & wellbeing campaign, the Black and Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS) resources webpage and School of Shabs).

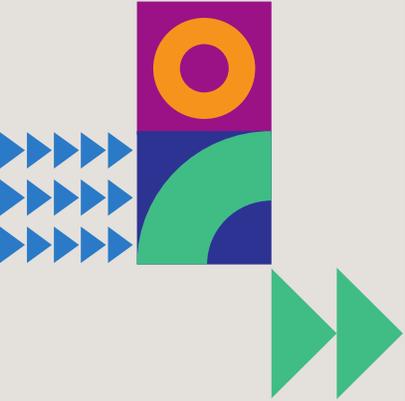


**B. Witnesses and observers:** *Empowering ethical accountability*

People who witness discrimination/oppression/racism often feel uncertain about how to intervene. SoB provides a proactive method to acknowledge and challenge effectively. Witnesses and observers can document incidents without putting themselves at risk, ensuring that discrimination/oppression/racism does not go unnoticed and/or become normalised. Observers can contribute to a growing body of evidence that reveals patterns of systemic injustice professionally and in wider society. SoB supports active social justice, helping witnesses move from silent and passive observance to meaningful action. For many witnesses, speaking up against discrimination/oppression/racism can be intimidating or professionally risky. SoB provides a safe, structured way to record and report incidents, making systemic change more achievable.

**C. Person/people responsible for the bias:** *A tool for accountability, critical reflection & growth*

Even well-intentioned people can exhibit [bias](#). SoB provides a logical, non-punitive method for people to reflect on their own actions, inactions and biases. People responsible for the bias are encouraged to analyse their decision-making and behaviours, recognising how instinctive and impulsive biases can influence professional judgment. By completing the template from their own perspective, people can confront how and why they perpetuated discrimination/oppression/racism and commit to learning and change. This process aims to convert guilt into being responsible and shame into taking accountability - cultivating a culture of growth rather than defensiveness. This approach helps to shift from a blame culture to a learning culture, where people actively deconstruct bias and commit to authentic and holistic social justice.



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SoB has the following self-explanatory sections:

- **1. Case study title**

*A brief descriptive title*

- **2. Background and context**

*Whose perspective is this case study written from?*

*Date of the incident (approximate or exact)*

*Location. For example: workplace, university, professional event, online etc*

*Setting. For example: team meeting, supervision, face-to-face interaction, training session etc*

*People involved. For example: anonymised service-user/ lived experience/ expert by experience, manager, colleague etc)*

*Relevant policies/protocols. For example: anti-racism policy, EDI framework, complaints process etc)*

*What prior experiences or organisational culture may have influenced the incident?*

*Were there any signs or indicators that the incident might occur? If so, what were they?*

- **3. Nature of the incident**

*Describe the incident as clearly and factually as possible*

*Was the racism covert (microaggressions, exclusion, unconscious bias) or overt (racial slurs, harassment, direct discrimination)?*

*Was the racism internalised, interpersonal, institutional, medical and/ or structural?*

*Were any other forms of discrimination/ oppression present from an intersectionality perspective?*

*What was the immediate impact on you or others involved?*

*How did the incident affect the dynamics within the team or organisation?*

*Were there any specific phrases or actions that stood out as particularly harmful or impactful?*

*How did the incident reflect broader societal issues related to race, discrimination and oppression?*

*What emotions did you and others involved feel before/ during/ after the incident?*

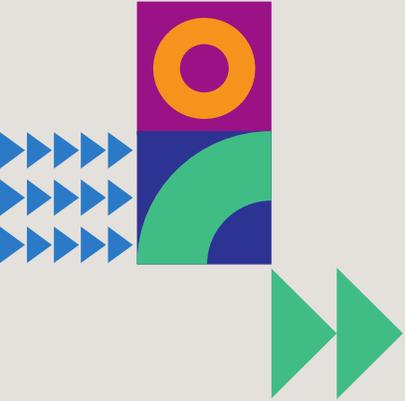
*How did the incident affect your professional relationships?*

*Did you notice any changes in team morale or cohesion following the incident?*



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- **4. How was the situation handled?**

*Who responded to the incident (if anyone)?*

*What action(s) were taken at the time? For example: reported to HR, challenged informally, ignored, escalated, etc.*

*Did the organisational policies/processes support an adequate and fair response?*

*Was trade union advice and/or representation provided?*

*What was the final outcome? For example: no action, disciplinary response, mediation, etc.*

*Were there any barriers that prevented a more effective response to the incident?*

*If you could change one aspect of how the situation was handled, what would it be and why?*

- **5. Reflection and learning**

*What could have been handled differently? For example: by you, colleagues, others involved or the organisation)*

*How did this incident affect your professional confidence, mental health, or sense of belonging in the workplace?*

*Has there been any follow-up action or commitment to change? If so, what?*

*What structural/systemic issues contributed to this incident?*

*Has the organisation taken any long-term corrective actions since the incident?*

*Is there a timeline/deadline for implementation, investigation, resolutions and/or review?*

*Key takeaways or recommendations for BASW*

*What personal biases or assumptions did this incident reveal in yourself or others?*

*Could your own practice be adjusted to avoid similar incidents in the future?*

*What role does self-care play in your response to incidents of racism, and how can it be prioritised?*

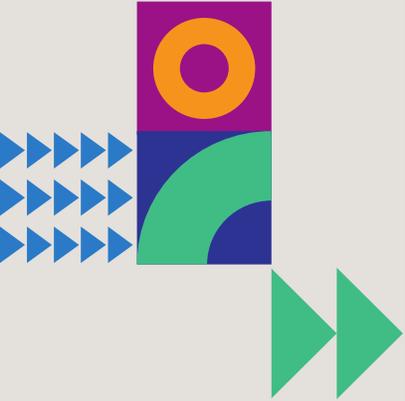
*Was there any resources or specific support that was helpful to you?*

*What advice would you give to someone encountering a similar situation in future?*



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- **6. Reflection and learning (for the person/people responsible for bias)**

*What was your initial rationale, justification or motivation for your action/inaction?*

*How has this incident changed your approach to discrimination, racism and oppression?*

*How do you think your actions were perceived by the victim(s) and others involved?*

*Have you since recognised any unintended consequences of your actions?*

*What steps will you take to repair harm and/or prevent future incidents?*

*Is there a timeline/deadline for implementation, investigation, resolutions and/or review?*

*Were your actions shaped by wider workplace culture, policies, or expectations? If so, how?*

*Are there systemic or structural factors that may have enabled your behaviour?"*

*What have you learned from reflecting on this incident?"*

*What concrete steps will you take to change your approach to discrimination, racism and oppression moving forward?*

- **7. Other comments or reflections**

SoB is a practical, structured and reflective tool that empowers and equips people. Unlike many reports that merely outline problems or recommend solutions that are not implemented, SoB is a universal template to document, analyse and support people in real-world scenarios.

*If social workers (victims/survivors/witnesses/people responsible) would like to share their completed case study with BASW England for collation and potential (anonymous) publication in the future, they can send completed submissions to [wayne.reid@basw.co.uk](mailto:wayne.reid@basw.co.uk) or keep it private for personal use.*

## PURPOSE



Document and reflect on experiences of discrimination, oppression and racism related to the Equality Act 2010

## PROCESS



- Case study title
- Background and context
  - Nature of the incident
- How was the situation handled?
  - Reflection and learning
- Reflection and learning (for the person/people responsible for bias)



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## PEOPLE



Victims/survivors – cathartic and therapeutic benefits

Witnesses – acknowledge and challenge discrimination

People responsible for bias – critical reflection and learning

## PROVISION



Policy, practice and education

Supports anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist approaches

Encourages systemic accountability

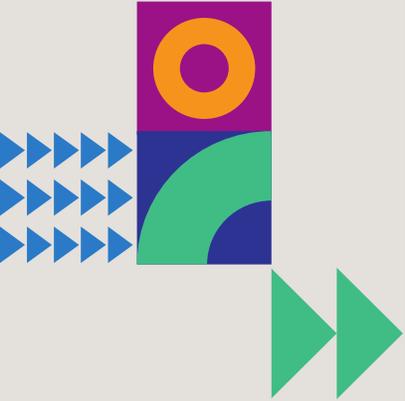


Conscious or unconscious?



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REVEAL > REFLECT > REPAIR



# What are the origins of SoB?

The Shades of Bias (SoB) case study template was developed by Wayne Reid (BASW England Professional and Social Worker), the Black and Ethnic Minority Professionals Symposium (BPS), Professional Capabilities and Development (PC & D) group, Anti Racist Movement (A.R.M) and School of Shabs following concerns raised by Black and Global Majority BASW England members including:

- Practice Educators - who reported racism with students and organisational practices
- Students - who reported racism in social work placements and academic settings
- Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS) - who encountered racism in recruitment, everyday practice, career progression and workplace cultures

These concerns were escalated through BASW (British Association of Social Workers) and representations made to key stakeholders and partners, highlighting systemic racism in social work education, early career pathways and relevant regulatory frameworks.

The development of SoB coincided with the publication of The Child Safeguarding Review Panel "It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children report, which highlighted a lack of accountability in addressing racism in safeguarding practices.

SoB is informed by BASW's Code of Ethics, Social Work England's professional standards and the Social Care Workforce Race and Equality Standards (SC WRES).

SoB is a logical progression from the 'Anti-racism in Social Work' activities across the UK (between 27/05/20 – 26/09/21) report.

The lack of tangible reforms on 'Anti-racism in Social Work' underscores the need for a practitioner-led tool that empowers individuals to document and challenge all forms of discrimination in all settings – hence the conceptualisation of the template. SoB is part of wider "hearts and minds" campaign to promote social justice in Social Work.

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# How can SoB be utilised more widely?

## To inform social work policy

- *Can be used as evidence in consultations to inform policies on community relations, workforce equality and social work education*
- *Provides anonymised case studies that policymakers can use to develop social justice strategies*
- *Aligns with initiatives like the SC WRES to collect data and track patterns of discrimination, oppression and racism.*

## To shape social work practice

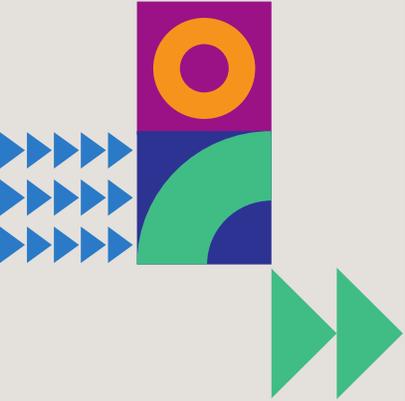
- *Can be used by professionals in practice, supervision and working directly with people*
- *Helps professionals assess their own decision-making and recognise patterns of discrimination, oppression and racism in service delivery*
- *Serves as a continuous professional development tool that enables professionals to document their learning and improvement in ethical practice*

## To enhance social work education

- *Universities and training providers can integrate SoB into programme delivery and student support to educate, empower and equip them*
- *Students can use it to document their experiences, ensuring their concerns and learning about bias and discrimination are recorded for them to use as/when necessary*
- *Supports Practice Educators in assessing students fairly and equitably whilst being mindful of their own needs and bias that may affect their practice*

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# The section for people responsible for the bias: *accountability, growth & self-reflection*

PERSON / PEOPLE  
RESPONSIBLE  
(WHERE APPROPRIATE)

This section in the Shades of Bias (SoB) case study template supports individuals who have engaged in biased, discriminatory or oppressive actions/behaviours whether knowingly or unwittingly. It has a structured, non-punitive approach to reflection, helping individuals take responsibility, learn and commit to anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice.

## Why engage?

- To recognise and understand personal biases
- To acknowledge and address the harm caused
- To align with professional ethics and regulatory expectations
- To contribute to a culture of accountability and systemic change

When completing a Shades of Bias case study, people responsible for the bias should focus on:

### Understanding your actions

- *What motivated your actions or decisions?*
- *Were any biases, stereotypes or assumptions at play?*
- *Were you aware of the potential impact at the time?*

### Impact on others

- *How might your actions have been perceived?*
- *What harm - intentional or not - may have occurred?*
- *How has this affected trust, relationships or the workplace culture?*

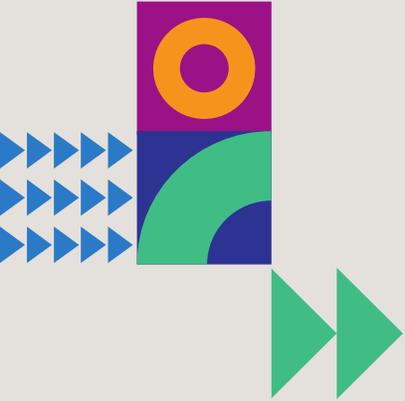
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### **Systemic & organisational influences**

- *Were workplace policies, norms or pressures a factor?*
- *Was there a lack of training or awareness contributing to your actions?*
- *What changes could help prevent similar incidents?*

### **Commitment to change**

- *What steps can you take to develop your awareness and practice?*
- *How will you demonstrate accountability and professional growth?*
- *What support (training, mentoring, supervision) could aid your development?*

### **Repair & move forward**

- *Have you taken any steps to acknowledge and address the harm caused?*
- *What does meaningful accountability look like in this situation?*
- *How can you contribute to a more inclusive and equitable environment?*

### **SoB encourages honest self-reflection. This process:**

- *Can be completed anonymously to promote openness*
- *Can be supported through professional supervision or group discussion*
- *Should be used as a developmental tool, rather than a box-ticking exercise*

By engaging meaningfully, people responsible for bias can move beyond defensiveness to take responsibility and contribute to their personal/professional growth that prioritises justice, equality and ethical practice.



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# Summary



## SHADES of BIAS

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SoB is a reflective framework for humanising people's lived experiences, promoting accountability and growth and informing policy reforms. By embedding SoB in policy, practice and education discussions, we can challenge discrimination, oppression and racism; amplify marginalised voices and create a profession that is truly committed to social justice.

The hope is that SOB becomes conventional and always useable during incidents of social injustice.

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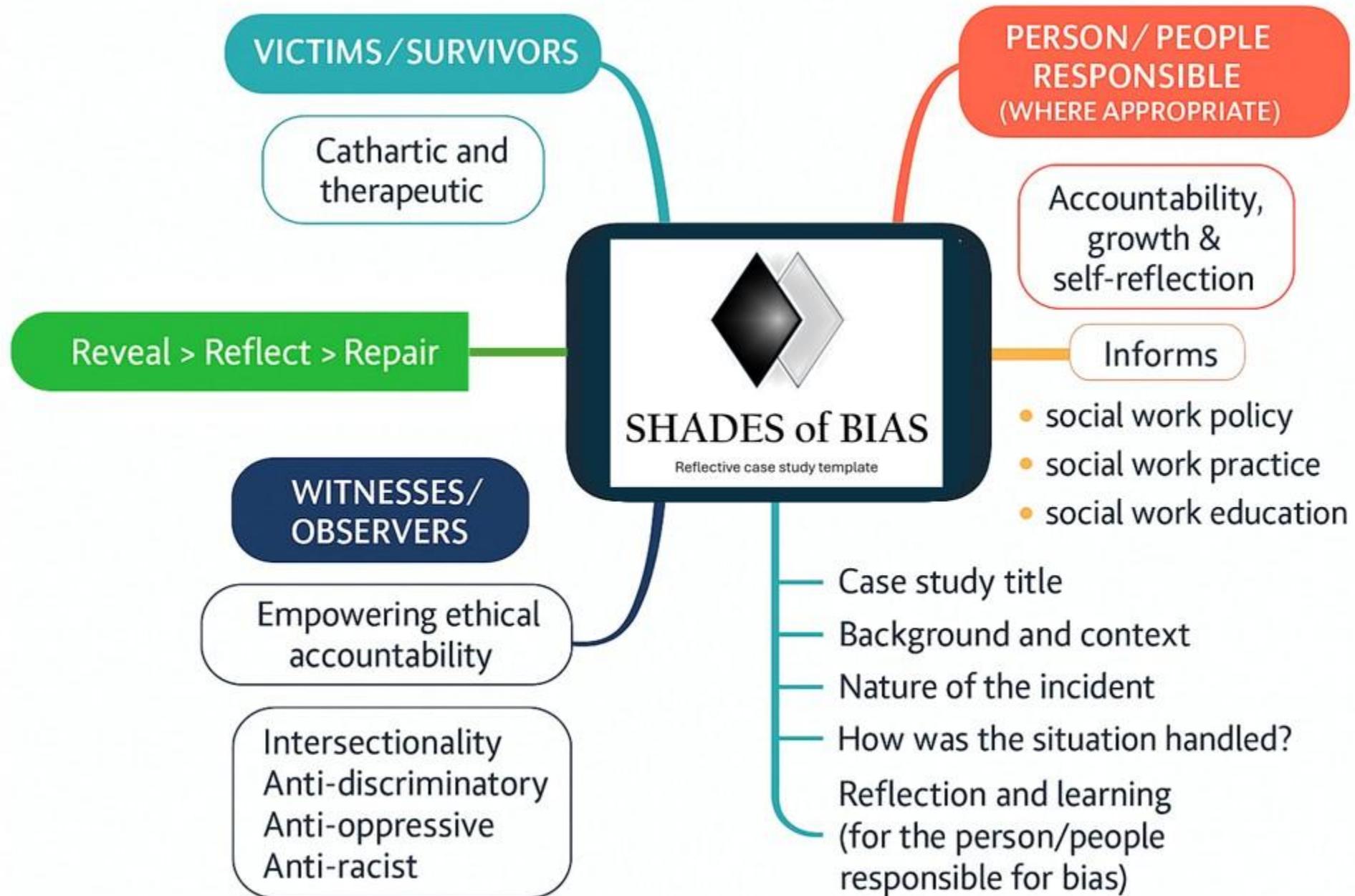
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# “Conscious or unconscious?”



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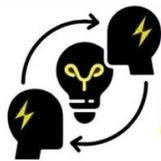
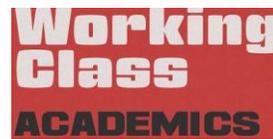
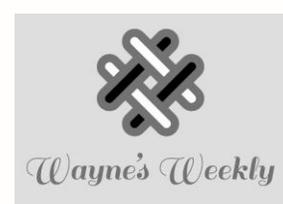
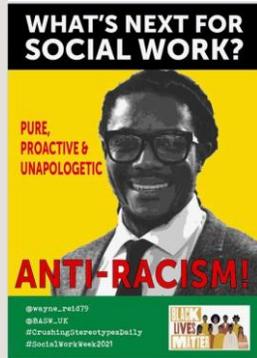
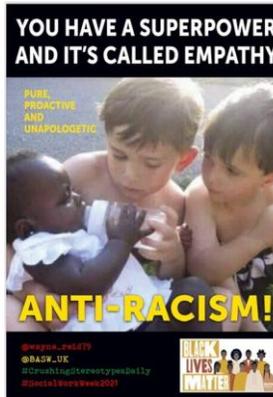


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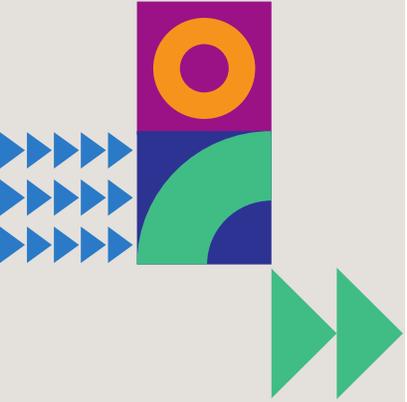
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**#CRUSHINGSTEREOTYPESDAILY** 🧠💬💡

# Relevant BASW England workstreams, frameworks and resources



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**Thank you. Any questions?**

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