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## WESTWAY TRUST ADMITS LONG-TERM CULTURE OF INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

**Westway Trust**, a London based charity charged with managing the 23 acres of land under the Westway in West London for the benefit of the local community, today admits a long-term culture of institutional racism.

A report out today by the Tutu Foundation, commissioned on behalf of Westway Trust, finds that:

- Westway Trust, has been and remains institutionally racist. The legacy of institutional racism lives within the organisation in terms of the experience and relations with the African Caribbean community, which has led to a continuing mistrust and suspicion.
- Over a number of decades, there has been evidence of a range of actions instigated by individuals at the Trust, which have created a level of mistrust from both local organisations and parts of the community. It was reported to the Review that this has had a significant impact on the African Caribbean community as well as other communities.
- At a point in its history, the Trust lost sight of the reason for its establishment and early focus on community and inclusivity. This resulted from an increasingly pragmatic approach as to how it viewed the land and a historical lack of diverse representation at Trustee and senior management level.

Westway Trust subsidises rent to third sector organisations, provides grants for arts and cultural activities and community groups within the North Kensington area. The Trust also runs adult learning courses and manages the provision of supplementary schools.

The following statement is from Westway Trust:

*“Allegations of institutional racism at the Trust have been made over several decades. These are serious allegations and needed to be heard and understood. Local citizens compelled the Trust to commission today’s report, to understand people’s experiences and criticisms and to address them in an authentic and open way.*

*Westway Trust sees this as an opportunity for us to examine our culture and practices, and to set out real plans for change.*

*We accept the recommendations laid out in the Tutu Foundation report. We want to be a truly inclusive organisation that is a beacon of good practice. We recognise the massive cost to individuals, communities and the whole of society when people are excluded.”*

The focus of the review was to hear evidence relating to perceptions and allegations of institutional racism within Westway Trust. The focus was not on individuals but organisational policies and practices and the organisational cultural norms, behaviours and attitudes which underpin them.

Following today’s report, the Westway Trust will announce a new strategy. The goal is to be a community centred organisation - one that supports the community to achieve political, economic, social, and environmental wellbeing and justice. Westway Trust needs, and wants to be, a trusted, reliable organisation helping the community to determine and design its own future.

Toby Laurent Belson, Chair of the Trustees said:

*Today Westway Trust apologises to our entire community. Those inside and outside of our organisation. Westway Trust is especially thankful to those who have fought so hard since 2015 to bring this issue into the light, including myself and other community trustees who now lead this organisation and members of the Community Advisory Group to the review. Westway Trust is sorry for the sacrifices you have had to make to achieve your goal. We are now able to do what is right by our community and take the organisation through the changes necessary to bring about reparative and restorative justice. Those changes will take time. We look ahead to working with and representing our community as never before, so that in time we may be the organisation our community deserves.*

Trustee Angela Spence, who became the Interim Chair part way through the review and helped drive forward the transition process, said:

*“To have reached the stage where an investigation into institutional racism had to take place is a complete failure of a charity that is entrusted to deliver at its core public benefit. The difference now is that we have a Board that reflects the community it serves and will no longer stand for indifference. The report shows that there is no place for complacency and ignorance in what should be a just society.”*

Sheraine Williams previously resigned as a trustee due to being disenfranchised and excluded from property and finance decisions. She has since returned to the charity in a new trustee role:

*“Progress has been a long and painful process. The fight for change happened internally and externally. It is hard for people to understand just how traumatic it can be to be on the receiving end of institutional racism whilst trying to be professional and do a good job. I’d like to pay tribute to other black female trustees before me who paved the way for the start of this change. I am excited to return as a trustee, and to be a part of revolutionising the new Trust. We call on the whole community of North Kensington to support and steward the Trust into a genuinely purposeful, new community-centred anchor.”*

Westway Trust now hopes their experience can be a blueprint for other charities, community organisations, government and businesses to carry out similar reviews.

Chair of Trustees Toby Laurent Belson continues:

*“We’d be happy to advise any organisations who might like to take a similar journey. Please get in touch if you would like our help. A review of this nature is just one way to achieve change. There are many, as even a cursory look across history shows us. All of us, whether individuals, communities, charities or businesses need to hold up a mirror to ourselves to move forward the national conversation on Institutional Racism.”*

ENDS

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

Westway Trust Trustees are available for interview. To arrange interviews please call Nadene Ghouri on 07939 232816 or email [press@westway.org](mailto:press@westway.org)

Embargoed documents, including joint statements and the Executive Summary of the Report, are available to download at [www.westwayreview.com/media](http://www.westwayreview.com/media)

Community Advisory Group hotline number: **0300 102 670**

**Definition of Institutional Racism:**

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping.”

(The above is a widely adopted definition from the late 1990s. Sir William Macpherson chaired the inquiry into the Metropolitan Police force specifically reviewing the investigation into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.)

**Westway Trust** is the charity charged with managing the 23 acres of land under the Westway in west London for the benefit of the local community. It subsidises rent to third sector organisations, provides grants for arts and cultural activities as well as community groups delivering in the area, runs adult learning courses and manages the provision of supplementary schools.

[www.westway.org](http://www.westway.org)

The **Community Advisory Group** (CAG) to the Review was established prior to the commencement of the Review to ensure trust and confidence in the review process. The CAG helped to define the terms and methods of the review; and will be integral to continuing to advise on how community participation, trust and confidence can be established and sustained before, during and after the review process.

[www.ircommunityadvisorygroup.co.uk](http://www.ircommunityadvisorygroup.co.uk)

The **Tutu Foundation UK** was set up to help institutions and communities prevent and resolve conflict and disagreement in keeping with the spirit of Ubuntu, which recognizes our common humanity and connectedness to seek reconciliation.

[www.tutufoundationuk.org](http://www.tutufoundationuk.org)