

# External mentorship & support for Black, Asian & Ethnic Minority staff programme to support career progression and potential

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## FUTURE LEADERS PROGRAMME



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The overall percentage of ethnic minority staff in the NHS has been increasing year-on-year and now stands at 24.2% .This is up from 22.4% in 2021 and demonstrates a 1.8% increase.

Due to an increase in international recruitment, London has the most diverse NHS workforce. However the evidence shows that not all staff have an equitable experience of working in the NHS. Making this step-change to ensure a more equal, fairer and kinder NHS for all our staff.

The annual Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) shows that whilst Whittington Health NHS Trust has relatively equal numbers of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BME) and White staff, there is a disparity at each level of seniority, with BME staff over-represented in lower bands and White staff over-represented in senior roles.

Addressing racism and its impact is crucial for creating an inclusive and equitable workplace.

NHS organisations have reportedly implemented policies and procedures that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, provide training on unconscious bias and cultural sensitivity and foster a culture of respect and acceptance. In addition, most NHS organisations are signed up to following :

# Introductions

- Development and enforcement of policies that explicitly state the organisation's commitment to anti-racism
- Provision of mandatory diversity and inclusion training for all employees, including managers and executives.
- Fostering a culture of inclusion through open dialogue and creating safe spaces for employees to discuss their experiences and concerns related to racism.
- Debiasing Recruitment
- Promoting Allyship and bystander interventions

Despite national directives such as the [Workforce Race Equality Standard](#) and efforts by organisations listed above to address racism, the injustice of racism still exist within NHS

This has led to BME staff feeling anxious, fearful and unsafe. With the experience of racism comes the fear of how they are perceived and treated as well as the adoption of mechanism through which to protect themselves. Stress results from the long-term impact of frequent encounters of microaggressions ,from the ongoing effects of systemic racism, low physical well-being and cumulative negative effects on mental health. Frustration arises with unfair treatment and powerlessness to control it. Individuals attempting to stand up for themselves can often be met with reprisals and a label that is difficult to shake off. This in turn can contribute to BME staff being 'stuck' in the same position and banding for many years.

A scheme by which mentoring & support is available for BME Staff and by a senior BME individual external to the organisation is deemed a way in which Whittington Health staff in the position described or in the same post/banding for many years can receive support and mentoring by those from a similar background to themselves who can contribute their own experience potentially enabling a more beneficial mentoring experience and outcome.

## Impact of Racism

The impact of racism on individuals and the organisation is well documented and highlighted below:

### Individual Level

- Emotional distress, anxiety and depression among individuals who experience it. Racism can lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem and a sense of not belonging with impact on individual's mental well-being and overall job satisfaction.
- Affects staffs ability to focus and perform at their best. They may feel demotivated, disengaged and less committed to their work which in turn negatively impacting the organization's success.
- Longer term these experiences are found to relate to lower self-esteem, symptoms of depression and suicidal ideations.

### Organisational Level

- NHS Trusts cannot fulfil the values highlighted within the NHS constitution
- Lack of innovation creativity and problem-solving within the organisation, limiting the potential for growth and success. This results from overlooking and/or undervaluing staffs perspectives, ideas and contributions .
- High employee turnover as individuals may choose to leave the organisation to escape the discriminatory environment. This can result in a loss of valuable talent and expertise as well as increased recruitment and training costs for the organisation.
- Creating toxic work environments where individuals feel unsafe, unwelcome and unsupported. It can lead to tension, conflict and division among employees, hindering collaboration and teamwork. This negative workplace culture can also deter potential job applicants and damage the organisation's reputation.
- Expose organisations to legal liabilities and financial consequences. Discrimination lawsuits can result in costly legal fees, settlements and damage to the organisation's reputation. Organisations may face fines and penalties if found guilty of discriminatory practices.



[Source: The King's Fund](#)

Source: [https://nhsproviders.org/media/695151/wres-2023-report-on-2022-data-otdb\\_final-1.pdf](https://nhsproviders.org/media/695151/wres-2023-report-on-2022-data-otdb_final-1.pdf)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>  
<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2019/11/lived-experiences-ethnic-minority-staff-nhs>

# Aim & Objective for External Mentoring for BME staff and by a BME senior individual

## Mentoring and Its Benefits

- The benefits of mentoring are numerous and reciprocal between mentor and mentee
- Provides an opportunity for the mentee to learn from the mentor's experience and expertise. Enabling the mentor to contribute to the personal and professional growth of the mentee as well as themselves.
- The mentee can benefit from the mentor's connections and introductions to other contact from their network.
- Mentors can expand their own networks through their mentees, creating opportunities for collaboration and professional growth improving and increasing staff satisfaction.
- **Note mentorship requires appropriate matching of mentor/mentee. Without which it is possible to experience both unconscious and deliberate bias from mentors who support from a deficit model rather than a strength-based approach. This can derail the mentee.**

## Aims & Objective of External Mentoring Support for BME Staff

Aim- create the opportunity for senior BME staff, Band 8A and above, to support a more junior BME colleague in regaining confidence by:

- Sharing their own experience and strategies used to address and overcome their lived experience of racism, including ingrained psychological and emotional impact.
- Offering generic mentoring support from a strength-based approach i.e., competency development across a range of skill sets in support of the mentee's development and career aspiration.

# Benefits of BME External Mentoring

## Benefits of BME and External BME Mentoring

Mentoring can be a rewarding experience for both mentors and mentees. The BME mentor can make a positive impact on an individual who has been affected by racism. They can contribute to the mentees' growth and success through advice and guidance born out of their own experience enabling the mentee to learn and develop coping strategies.

### BME Mentee perspective on their mentor;

- Can act as role models, advocates or even “cultural translators” for the more junior BME staff.
- Enables the BME mentee to recognise their own resilience, overcome challenges and believe in their abilities. This would be qualified by the BME mentor's own journey and achievements
- Boost the BME mentee's confidence and self-esteem further by providing them with guidance, support and validation to kick start self belief, career aspiration and vision once again.
- Gain valuable insights, perspectives and guidance that can help them navigate their career paths, make informed decisions and achieve their goals.
- Offer BME mentees insights into what unconscious bias feels like, provide advice on navigating the common challenges BME staff can face and help 'stuck' BME staff get unstuck and progress.

### Why External BME Mentoring

- Can bring a fresh perspective to the table. They are not directly involved in the same organisation or specialty so they can remain objective. This can help the BME mentee see things from a different perspective and come up with solutions.
- Has a network of other contacts within the NHS or within the health and social care system. The arrangement provides the mentee with the opportunity to be introduced to new people, potential sponsors, or partners who can contribute to the mentee development. This additional network can open doors to new opportunities and expand professional connections.
- Provide **objective feedback** on the mentee's situation, position and performance. They can offer constructive feedback and help them identify blind spots or areas for improvement in support of growth and professional development.
- Facilitates open and confidential discussions with the mentor, readily share challenges, concerns and aspirations without worrying about any conflicts of interest or repercussions. This safe space allows for honest and meaningful conversations.
- Hold the mentee accountable for their goals and actions. They can help the mentee set ambitious targets, track progress. Provide guidance to keep the mentee on track and motivated by acknowledging and celebrating successes along the way.

### Benefits to the Local & Wider System

- Contributing to the Model Employer priority, by addressing representation of the overall BAME workforce at senior levels
- Improves Recruitment & Promotion - Ensures staffing reflects the diversity of their community labour markets.
- Reduces the Disciplinary gap - Close the ethnicity gap in entry to formal disciplinary processes as set out in A Fair Experience for All.
- Supports the recommendations of the London Workforce Race Equality and emergent ICS level EDI priorities.



## External Mentoring & Support for Black, Asian & Ethnic Minority Staff - Pilot

**The scheme is not intended to replace white senior staff mentoring of BME staff, as there are clear benefits for this type of approach.** It is intended to be an adjunct to current Trust programmes. It acknowledges the value and additional benefit for BME staff experiencing racism who are now 'stuck' in a place of mistrust and the view that nothing will/can change for them. The scheme provides those individuals with the support they need from somebody who understands their situation and distress while bringing a fresh perspective and using their knowledge to help the mentee progress with ongoing support and supervision.

***The idea is given a working title of 'Whittington Health – External mentorship & support for Black, Asian & Ethnic Minority staff programme to support career progression and potential. It is intended to :***

- *Act as a deliberate conduit to build inclusion leadership. designed to unite organisations and staff in activities that address the barriers to race equality in the workplace' with a multi team approaches and organisational and individual level aspirations.*
- *Help shape and develop inclusive and systems-focused talent management and succession planning for Whittington Health as part of the local health and care system.*
- *Act as enablers for cultural transformation in support of WRES and WDES goals.*
- *Place the pledge of the NHS constitution at the very heart of leadership practice at Whittington Health, enabling staff to be their best for the optimum patient and service user experience and outcome.*
- *Support the work of sponsors and allies who have a crucial role to “put forward” the BME person they are helping to prepare for career progression.*
- *Support Individuals to take actions and be intentional .*








## Checklist for Mentor

- Create a safe and supportive environment where the mentee feels comfortable sharing their goals, challenges and aspirations.
- Actively listen and ensure feedback is constructive and with guidance and advice based on own experience and expertise. Encourage the mentee to express their thoughts and ideas openly.
- Support the mentee to navigate their own personal and professional development by sharing knowledge, skills and experiences. Offer insights and perspectives that can help the mentee make informed decisions and overcome obstacles.
- Help the mentee to set clear and achievable goals and hold them accountable for their progress. Encourage the mentee to take ownership of their development and make necessary adjustments along the way.
- Support the mentee to network and access opportunities for growth and development i.e., introduction of the mentee to relevant contacts. Recommend them for projects or positions, and provide guidance on building professional relationships.
- Empower the mentee to take ownership of their own development to become independent learners.
- Encourage the mentee to think critically, explore new ideas and take calculated risks. Foster self-confidence and resilience in the mentee.
- Encourage the mentee to pursue lifelong learning and personal growth.

## Checklist for Mentee

- Openness to new ideas, perspectives and feedback. Willingness to learn from their mentor's experiences and expertise and be receptive to constructive criticism and guidance.
- Have clear goals and objectives for their personal and professional development. Be proactive in setting these goals and communicate them to their mentor. To be willing to work collaboratively with their mentor to create action plans and strategies to achieve these goals.
- Take an active role in the mentoring relationship. Aim to initiate conversations, ask questions, and seek guidance and advice from their mentor. Take the initiative to schedule meetings, follow up on action items and drive the progress of their own development.
- Take ownership of your own development and hold yourself accountable for your actions and progress. To follow through on commitments, meet deadlines and take responsibility for your own learning and growth.
- To be reflective and self-aware. Take time to reflect on own strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Open to self-assessment and feedback and actively seek opportunities for self-reflection and self-improvement.
- Respects the mentor's time, expertise and guidance. Show appreciation for the mentor's support and acknowledge the value they bring to the mentoring relationship. To be respectful of boundaries and maintain confidentiality when necessary.
- Recognises the importance of networking and relationship building. Actively seek opportunities to expand own network, build relationships with professionals in their field and leverage these connections for own personal and professional growth.
- Be committed to continuous learning and growth. Actively seek out learning opportunities, whether through formal training, workshops, or self-study. Open to feedback and actively seek ways to improve own skills and knowledge.

## The Overview - BME External Mentoring Programme Pilot

	<p><b>Pilot :</b></p> <p>The programme ran as a pilot between Whittington Health and UCLH in the summer of 2022, with UCLH providing the senior BME staff support. It was developed and framed with Organisation Development (OD) colleagues, senior management and staff networks. Participants were recruited through word of mouth and recommendations. The scheme was particularly suited to BME staff who were 'stuck' in their position or had a negative experience of the Trust. Mentors were volunteers who offered to support the programme.</p>
	<p><b>Participants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>3</b> identified Whittington Health BME Staff (Band 7 – 8a) were identified and carefully matched to senior UCLH BME colleagues of Band 8C and above at UCLH)</li> <li>• <b>3</b> further BME (2023) were identified with one senior BME colleague Interim Band 8C role linked with BME colleague outside UCLH (within and out of NCL)</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Impact Measure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre and 6 months Post external mentoring self-determined confidence in managing career options and progression assessment broken down into these 3 areas. Changes in what participants know, think and feel (“potential value”), Changes in what the participants do (action taken – “applied value”), Changes desired by the pilot (objectives – “realised value”) Group verbal feedback mentors / mentees)</li> <li>• The hard measurement is to include the number of people who attain higher banded roles demonstrating actual movement in career progression.</li> <li>• There is progress (though not mandatory) towards meeting Model Employer targets and</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Outcome:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of participant n=3 have acquired senior roles either at the Trust or withing NCL with n=1 participants acquiring a double promotion B7 - 8C.</li> <li>• The pilot programme has already delivered results in so far as all of the participants n= 6 have reported increased confidence</li> <li>• The attainments of the benefits attributed to external BME mentoring for BME staff who find themselves 'stuck' in their position and banding</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Next Step:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior managers across the ICSU and corporate services are asked to identify suitably qualified staff members (bands 5 to 8a) who may wish to become mentees and those working in bands 7 and above who wish to be mentors.</li> <li>• Formal Launch to promote the offer to those staff who might benefit and line managers</li> <li>• Further ideas in development and expanding the external mentoring opportunities across NCL and “ear-marking” vacancies for promotion opportunities and secondment purpose</li> </ul>



# BME External Mentoring Programme –Testimonials from Participants

## Mentees

- *"It's being, it's added a lot to boost my morale and then confidence".*
- *"You know, I can be open here, I had a lot of sleepless nights and and really having D on the other end just to kind of go through it, pain frustration an to know she understands how I am feeling helped a lot..."*
- *'And we both understood what the expectations are for this journey and like we also didn't put like a kind of a time limit on it or a number times we would meet it just we've done it very organically.'*

## Mentors

- *this kind of program, it is really useful, is really necessary. I've come through my NHS career and and faced challenges but overcame them and I thought it's important to be able to, to support anybody else coming through..'*
- *'P is is a very, very able, very independent, very strong personality. So, it was really nice to be able to have that communication with somebody who does know their mind and is able to articulate themselves. So I didn't feel burdened by taking on this cause.'*
- *'..I felt really part of that journey and you know, and and I felt like I was able to really champion her...*



## CASE STUDY 1

This case study tells the story of J, a nurse who faced challenges in her career and found support through external mentoring, which helped her to overcome difficulties and secure higher positions.

J is qualified as a Registered Mental Health Nurse in 2001. After 12 years in a Band 6 role she gained a Band 7 promotion in 2018. However, in 2016 she sought the support of her line manager to apply for a Band 7 post within the team but was told she needed more time. In 2018, after the inability to retain the Band 7 thrice, the manager approached Nurse J and asked her to apply. She was successful in gaining that position on this occasion.

As a Band 7 she was often challenged by the administrative staff and reported for issues. She was often called to a line manager meeting without prior discussion, to relay her version of the story. She was treated differently and often refused training because there would be no one to pick up her work. Yet other colleagues of the same banding would often be released for training. Nurse J had considered leaving but felt it would be the same elsewhere and the job suited her family's arrangement.

The Band 7 post provided Nurse J with the opportunity to take on more responsibilities. She had achieved marked improvements to the impact measures. With this experience she felt she would be in a position to apply for a band 8a in 2020. She continued to experience ongoing challenges from the team and a lack of support and development from her line manager.

Nurse J took the opportunity to participate in the External Mentoring Pilot in July 2022 and met with her mentor on a regular basis once a month. Her mentor provided advice and supported her through the challenges she had faced. She found it helpful that her experience was accepted. There were gaps in her knowledge, without the experience and expertise to navigate the challenging queries, being able to ask her mentor without the feeling it would be held against her was liberating. Nurse J felt as though she had known her mentor for years and her support was welcomed and trusted.

***'It never made me feel I was lacking, but I was motivated to develop. The connection was one of the most helpful things. We had a good relationship. You have to be able to trust, and I could trust my mentor. I opened up about all that has been burdensome to get the best benefit from the relationship'.***

In August 2022, with the support and encouragement from her mentor, Nurse J successfully secured a Band 8B role. She continued to face challenges. She felt she had to constantly watch her back and reported moments of despair, sleepless nights and weight loss. She felt her experience was because she is black. Her line manager was a white senior member of the organisation. There was the anxiety that anything she said would be reported to her line manager. Her mentor provided much needed support and she subsequently excelled in the role making marked improvements to the service.

With her growing confidence her mentor encouraged her to apply for a band 8c role. Nurse J said she did prepare but felt that all the mountains that she believed were unsurmountable had been moved out of the way. In addition she received preparation support for this strategic role from her mentor's contacts, a BME Chief Nurse and a senior white colleague. Nurse J was successful in that interview.

Nurse J's words of encouragement is that *it is possible to move on from a difficult situation, at times, that support is more impactful from someone who understands the struggles and provide practical know how to get you from that unjust place of "I am here", and "they are there" feeling and "that's that".*

## CASE STUDY 2

KT began working in the NHS in 2010 as a Team Supervisor for a new and dynamic service with over 15 staff. As the service grew, KT's responsibilities increased and advanced to become the Band 7 Service Manager. This role required the complex task of consolidating teams from two different boroughs.

By 2016, KT was managing three services across two boroughs and leading a team that subsequently expanded to 55 staff. Despite successfully managing a growing and culturally diverse team, KT noticed a lack of career progression opportunities and felt that white colleagues were being promoted more often. KT observed that white colleagues seem to have clearer pathways for career advancement compared to other colleagues.

KT reported that establishing a positive mentoring relationship with a fellow BME mentor who understood and empathised with her experiences had been very beneficial. Creating a supportive and open space for development had helped her in her professional journey. Establishing a mentoring relationship with someone with a similar background was productive. The lack of cultural barriers in their relationship contributed to a supportive mentorship experience and left her feeling understood without the need to try very hard to strike the right chord or have her experiences downplayed.

***'I found that the lack of suspicion means that I am more open to receiving constructive feedback and guidance from my mentor and as a whole'***

KT has not yet secured a promotion, but she is making progress thanks to the guidance and support of her mentor. She has learned about career development and the strategies necessary for advancement. She has updated her CV, worked on a personal statement and started applying for new roles. She is also planning mock interviews to prepare for any shortlisting.

KT reports that the program has been a great morale and confidence booster. She feels much better equipped to pursue her goals. The support she has received so far has been excellent and she is grateful for it. KT's confidence about promotion has increased. She now believes that positive changes are possible for her career advancement.

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