

Improving diversity within NHS leadership roles

East of England Ethnic Minority Nurses, Allied Health Professionals and Social Care Leadership Development Programme

SUMMARY REPORT, MAY 2025



Foreword

Building on the success of the 2023 Maternity & Neonatal Leadership Development Programme, funding from NHS England facilitated the expansion of the initiative to include the enrolment of a wider range of staff. In addition to ethnic minority nurses, the latest cohort comprised both AHP's and social workers.

Funding was provided by the following NHS England bodies: the Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) and Chief Midwifery Officer (CMidO) Ethnic Minority Action Plan (EMAP), Regional Chief Allied Health Professionals (AHP), Nurses Directorate and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Workforce Training and Education).

This iteration of the programme was an outstanding example of effective multidisciplinary training and highlighted the value of sharing learning across professional boundaries. All sessions were focused on leadership development, rather than participant's job titles, creating a sense of equity and inclusion across the cohort.

The programme's vision was to ensure its priorities were aligned with those of the CNO & CMidO Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Strategic Advisory Group, National EMAP steering group and the [NHS EDI improvement plan's](#) six high impact actions (NHS England, 2023a).

The programme was delivered over 12 sessions in a six-month period, and its successes include the promotion of approximately 10 colleagues by the time the programme completed. A celebration and graduation event were held in September 2024, to recognise and celebrate the achievements of all who had completed the programme.



The terminology we use

Please note there are various terminologies used in the UK to refer Black, Asian and other ethnic groups.

BME: Black and minority ethnic.

BAME: Black, Asian and minority ethnic.

Ethnic minorities: All ethnic groups except the White British group. Ethnic minorities include White minorities, such as [Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller groups](#).

Global majority: A collective term for people of indigenous, African, Asian, or Latin American descent, who constitute approximately 85% of the global population.

For the purpose of this report, we will refer to the participants as ethnic minority(ies) following [government guidance published in 2021](#) (Writing about ethnicity, 2024). Around 13.5% of the [East of England's population](#) is ethnically diverse, and the remaining 86.5% White (Business in the Community, 2023).

Background

National and regional NHS workforce data points to limited progress in increasing the representation of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in senior roles. According to the [NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard \(WRES\)](#), disparities remain in recruitment practices, with white applicants more likely to be appointed in a role than their ethnic minority counterparts (NHS England, 2023b).

As such, the aim of the Leadership Development Programme was to enhance career progression for and increase awareness of the talent pools of ethnic minority staff within integrated care systems (ICS), NHS trusts and service providers.

Based on Health Innovation East's initial scoping:

- Promoting specific mentoring and sponsorship programmes aimed at ethnic minority staff can address some of the leadership development challenges in the workplace.
- There is an opportunity to further support cultural intelligence and inclusive leadership among nursing and AHP leaders across the East of England.
- Further engaging internationally recruited or educated staff provides an opportunity to improve the management of their talent within the NHS.
- A joint approach to leadership development can foster allyship and

strengthen accountability for building a diverse workforce.

In 2022/23 Health Innovation East received the funding necessary to deliver the East of England Ethnic Minority Maternity and Neonatal Nurses Leadership Development Programme.

A cohort of 22 people completed the course. 10 of whom were promoted by the time the programme completed. A further 8 people were promoted or started a new job (of a higher banding), within one year of completing the programme. The programme went on to be shortlisted for Outstanding Achievement of the Year award in 2023 BAME Health and Care Awards.

[Read the programme report on the Health Innovation East website.](#)

The 2024/25 programme

Applications to the programme were reviewed by a diverse panel to ensure fairness and equity. The programme was delivered over six months, finishing in September 2024.

Programme aims: The programme was an opportunity to heighten representation within our region, in the following areas:

- Increasing the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff in Band 6 and above.
- Increase the representation of ethnic minorities in senior roles and board memberships – in line with representation across the NHS workforce.
- Enhance access to opportunities like secondments, shadowing, mentorship and coaching for ethnic minority staff.
- Boost involvement of ethnic minority staff in committees, groups, and media at all levels within the NHS.
- Ensure equitable access to and positive experiences in professional education and training for nursing, AHP, and social care staff.
- Reducing disciplinary referrals for ethnic minority colleagues and promote non-discriminatory, anti-racist practices, in line with [national guidance](#).
- Supporting the continued adoption of the national programme [Getting to Equity](#)

Application process

Applications were open to all Band 6 and 7 ethnic minority nurses, AHPs and social workers in the East of England. Priority was given to those who had:

- Been at Band 6 or 7 for two or more years.
- Had applied for promotion or higher band role and were unsuccessful.
- Were from an ethnic minority group likely to face the most discrimination, as reported through the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) data (NHS England, 2023b).

A total of 183 applications were received. A review was carried out to ensure that there was equal opportunity offered to applicants. 45 people started the programme. The cohort comprised two colleagues in NHS Band 5 (due to meeting other eligibility requirements), 22 from Band 6 and 21 within Band 7. Of 45 participants there were 33 nurses, 10 AHP's and 2 social workers.

The programme

Participants had access to a mix of face-to-face events, online workshops and protected time for self-directed learning. Over the course of six months, the programme included leadership sessions and action learning sets. Participants also completed a quality improvement (QI) project, which enabled participants to develop their QI skills.

Through the programme, participants had an opportunity to:

- Build a network of connections to support their career and personal development.
- Improve understanding of their personal leadership style.
- Develop greater self-presence, soft skills and awareness of personal impact.
- Develop their understanding of QI principles and the ability to lead QI projects.
- Build their confidence in tackling workplace issues.
- Understand how to look after their wellbeing.
- Develop an awareness of the opportunities available within their organisations and the tools, techniques and people available to help them progress in their career.
- Complete a critical reflective writing essay (to degree level), which was externally graded.

Impact



Below are just some of the opportunities and achievements reported by the cohort as a result of taking part in the programme:

- Three colleagues promoted within six months of completing the programme.
- One colleague promoted to become a lecturer at a leading university in the region.
- A neonatal nurse was shortlisted for Outstanding BAME Inclusion Achievement of the Year at the National BAME Health & Care Awards 2024.
- A nurse was a keynote speaker at a regional LGBTQ+ event.
- An AHP received a commendation from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy for setting up a mentoring scheme for internationally educated colleagues.
- Externally graded essays resulted in five distinctions, 14 merits and 20 pass grades.



Evaluation

Feedback for all the programme's sessions was very positive. The sessions most highly rated by the cohort were on 'Building a coaching culture', 'Leading for improvement', and 'Taking charge of your career'.

Participant's reflections

'All the topics have been very insightful and had allowed us to reflect on our journey especially within the NHS. The speakers were very good, coming from their personal and professional experiences, and the deep advocacy that they have developed in ensuring that colleagues from the global majority are given equal opportunities regardless of background and ethnicity.'

'By shadowing an executive sponsor, I learnt many managerial aspects of my trust, accountability that leaders hold for the public in a public institution, responsibility and many other aspects of the leader's job were exposed to me, and I learnt a lot.'

'360 feedback was very helpful and useful for my development. It has opened my eyes to things that I was not aware of and the things that I need work towards. It has helped me to also take some time to reflect on myself and some decision-making.'

'This development programme has made me aware of many more leadership qualities, skills and relationships that I wasn't aware of. It has given me time and space to decide what I want to do next and where I want to go next in my career'.

Next steps

At Health Innovation East we will continue to focus on a ground-up approach, with support from leadership within the region's health and care systems, to ensure that aspiring staff at Band 6 and 7 are able to take up leadership roles and develop their career along equitable paths.

We hope that alumni from previous iterations of the programme will play an integral part in delivering the next iteration of this important leadership development work, with the cohort progressing to be future leaders and mentors.

For more information on this project, contact Tendai Nzirawa, maternity clinical improvement lead, at tendai.nzirawa@healthinnovationeast.co.uk.

Acknowledgements

Health Innovation East led on the implementation and delivery of the East of England Ethnic Minority Nurses, Allied Health Professionals and Social Care Leadership Development Programme.

The programme was co-designed and supported by the East of England Chief Nursing Officer (CNO) & Chief Midwifery Officer (CMidO) AHP Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Delivery Group.

We are grateful to all of the speakers and facilitators who supported the delivery of this programme.

This programme was co-designed and supported by the EoE CNO CMidO AHP BME Delivery group.

Please note at the time of writing this report, some of the individuals have now changed job roles.

- **Geraldine Rodgers** OBE - Director of Nursing for Leadership & Quality, Nurse Fellow for Older People
- **Rachel Wakefield** - Regional Chief Allied Health Professional (SRO of the programme)
- **Tendai Ndongwe** – Deputy Head of EDI
- **Danny Karystinos** - System Culture Transformation Lead (C&P ICS) & Workforce Improvement Lead: Nursing and Midwifery
- **Celina Mfuko** - System Culture Transformation Lead - MSE • Chafick Peerun - Head of NHS Continuing Healthcare programme.
- **Dan Spooner** - Deputy Chief Nurse – West Suffolk Hospital
- **Sharon McNally** - Chief Nurse & Deputy Chief Executive -Princess Alexandra Hospital
- **Deborah Whittaker** - Deputy Director of Nursing, Leadership & Quality - NHS England – East of England
- **Chafick Peerun** - Head of AACC - Clinical Quality Directorate - NHS England – East of England
- **Tendai Nzirawa** FRCN - Maternity Clinical Improvement Lead & Regional Lead EoE CNO CMidO BME Strategy Advisory Group

Speakers/facilitators:

- **Dr Felicia Kwaku OBE** - Former Chair - NHS England (CNO CMidO)

BME SAG) and Associate Director of Nursing/Senior Head of Nursing for Acute Speciality Medicine - Kings Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

- **Cherron Inko-Tariah MBE** - Author - Consultant - Coach - Facilitator NExD - The Power of Staff networks
- **AUDREY LINTON MA** - Author – Coach - Facilitator - OD Specialist - p31global
- **Jennifer Pearson** - Head of Nursing Div 2 - The Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Birmingham, Professional Nurse Advocate, Regional Lead CNO CMIDO BME Strategic Advisory Group NHSE
- **Jabu Chikore** -Mental Health Lead, UCLH, Vice chairperson of ZIMNA-UK, A member of the Jabali Men’s Network
- **Marsha Jones** - Deputy Chief Nurse - Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Chair of Society of African and Caribbean Midwives (SoAC), Founder member of the Caribbean Nurses and Midwives Association (CNMA) UK
- **Dr Ruth Oshikanlu** MBE QN FihV FRCN FRSA FRSPH FAAN FFMRC SI RN RM RSCPHN BSc (Hons) PGDip PGDip MSc DHSC(h) Nurse, Midwife, Health Visitor, Queen’s Nurse, Churchill Fellow,
- **Paul Vaughan** RN, MSc National Deputy Director Community Nursing and Primary Care Nursing – NHS England Former Chair of Royal College of Nursing Council 2023 - 2025
- **Dr Joan Myers** OBE - Leading NHS Consultant in the UK, A renowned NHS nurse UK leader, consultant, keynote speaker, strategy advisor, and educator
- **Dr Cynthia Okpokiri** - Lecturer in Social Work, School of Social Work and Member, Centre for Research on Children and Families
- **Neema Young** RN, MBA, CMgr FCMI - Leadership and Organisational Development Practitioner (EDI Lead)
- **Ashila Bhutia** (Bsc, Msc PT, MCSP) Regional AHP Workforce Lead- East of England NHS England & Deputy Chair for AHP Ethnic Minority Network- East of England
- **Tazivei Masarira** Physiotherapy Services Manager -Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital - Deputy Co-Chair for AHP Ethnic Minority Network- East of England
- **Dan Spooner** - Deputy Chief Nurse – West Suffolk Hospital
- **Sharon McNally** - Interim Chief Executive -Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow
- **Vi Thomas** National Co-Chairs - NHS England (CNO CMidO BME SAG) & Director of Nursing and Quality - Professional and System Leadership, NHS England and Improvement (London Region)
- **Gifty Markey** - National Co-Chairs -NHS England (CNO CMidO BME SAG) & Associate Chief Nursing Officer for MH, LD & Neurodiversity - North Bristol NHS Trust
- **Celina Mfuko** - System Culture Transformation Lead (MSE) - NHSE East of England Workforce, Training, & Education (People & Culture - EDI Team)
- **Caroline Angel** - Director – Patient Safety, Health Innovation East and

Q Member

- **Geraldine Rodgers** OBE - Director of Nursing for Leadership & Quality, Nurse Fellow for Older People NHS England East of England
- **Rachel Wakefield** - Regional Chief Allied Health Professional – NHS England
- **Tendai Ndongwe** – Deputy Head of Head of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - NHS England East of England
- 3D Coaching
- **Elizabeth G. Pearson** - AdDipN, RGN, BSc (Hons) Nursing, MBA (Health and Social care) - Nurse / Lecturer in Nursing; Co-chair and Trustee Mary Seacole Trust UK
- **This programme co-designed and Supported by the EoE CNO CMidO AHP BME Delivery group.**
- **Geraldine Rodgers** OBE - Director of Nursing for Leadership & Quality, Nurse Fellow for Older People (Co-SRO (Senior Responsible Officer) of the programme)
- **Rachel Wakefield** - Regional Chief Allied Health Professional (Co-SRO of the programme)
- **Tendai Ndongwe** – Deputy Head of EDI
- **Danny Karystinos** - System Culture Transformation Lead (C&P ICS) & Workforce Improvement Lead: Nursing and Midwifery
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