



NHS NORTH WEST
Race Equity Assembly

**NHS North West
Race Equity Assembly**

Annual Report 2025-2026

NHS

England
North West

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A new name for the Assembly

Effective April 2026, the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly (formerly the NHS North West Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Assembly) has a new name that better aligns our identity with our strategic mission. While the term 'BAME' is well-used and recognised, there are instances where the acronym might obscure the distinct, diverse experiences of the individual communities it represents. By moving to 'Race Equity' the Assembly shifts towards a more granular, outcome-focused approach. This change, driven by member feedback, emphasises a commitment to tackling specific health inequalities and systemic racism with greater clarity and visibility.



Welcome

Introducing our annual report 2025–2026.

When the Covid-19 pandemic exposed deep-rooted health inequalities in racialised communities, the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly (previously known as the NHS North West Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Assembly) was formed as part of a regional leadership response to bring about long-term, meaningful system change on anti-racism and health inequalities.

Six years on, we continue to challenge racism and inequality in all forms. We work collaboratively to advance equality, diversity and inclusion across NHS organisations, offering practical support through our Anti-racist Framework.

We're proud of the progress we've made, the partnerships we've built and the impact we're seeing. And as we look ahead, we remain focused on creating a fairer, unapologetically anti-racist and more inclusive healthcare system for everyone.

Read on to learn more about our work and the difference it's making.



Thoughts from our Co-chairs

What began as an urgent effort to understand and address the disproportionate impact of the Covid-19 virus on minoritised communities has become a broad and dynamic movement for change.

The NHS North West Race Equity Assembly brought together leaders to place race equity as a central priority for the health and care system in our region.



Evelyn Asante-Mensah OBE
Independent Co-chair, NHS North West
Race Equity Assembly

Several years on, our mission remains as urgent as ever. Workforce inequalities persist, including barriers to career progression, bullying and harassment, and under-representation in senior leadership. The unacceptable reality is that many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues experience overt racism while performing their roles.

This continues alongside the longstanding poor health outcomes affecting minoritised communities. There are concerning disparities in maternal and neonatal outcomes, mental health access and patient experience that underscore the ongoing need for systemic change.

The Assembly has moved seamlessly from discussion to action, with 48% of committed NHS Trusts achieving Anti-racist Framework (ARF) Bronze-level recognition. This is a vital foundational step to address racial inequalities.

However, the progress made is set against a challenging wider context. Recent increases in racism and racial tensions across the UK, and globally, highlight the difficult environment in which racialised colleagues continue to work and live.

Our vision remains unchanged: to advocate for minoritised communities, support the NHS in the North West to become unapologetically anti-racist, and work collectively to ensure equity in health, care, and opportunity for all.

Thoughts from our Co-chairs

The NHS is undergoing huge change, and this presents a significant opportunity to ensure that anti-racism is at the forefront of our strategic commissioning, workforce planning and organisational priorities.

Over the past year, the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly has made significant strides in embedding anti-racist principles into our healthcare systems. Our role is to ensure the voices of staff and communities are heard, valued, and acted upon.



Louise Shepherd CBE

Co-chair, NHS North West Race Equity Assembly
Regional Director, NHS England - North West

Following the leadership of Richard Barker, I have been proud to step up to co-chair and support this vital platform for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic leaders to share their experiences, shape discussions, and influence how we deliver care and support to our workforce across the North West.

It has been particularly heartening to see our Anti-racist Framework (ARF) being adopted by multiple Integrated Care Boards and Trusts, with many achieving Bronze-level recognition.

Yet, despite this forward momentum, evidence shows us that we still have a very long way to go to reduce the inequalities faced due to interpersonal and systemic racism across the NHS.

Workforce inequalities and health disparities affecting minoritised communities remain pressing, and we must strive for collective action across the whole North West system to turn ambition into meaningful, tangible action.

Meet our Steering Group Chair

In a diverse and interconnected world when inclusion is truly embedded, it becomes part of how an organisation thinks, leads and delivers. It strengthens the connections between people, lifts morale and creates the conditions for lasting, meaningful progress.

These are the principles that guide the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly's work, and, as Chair of the Steering Group, my focus is on ensuring that our strategic oversight translates into meaningful impact.



Sharmila Kar

Joint Director Equality and Engagement,
NHS GM Integrated Care (Manchester
Locality)/Manchester City Council
NHS North West Race Equity Assembly
Steering Group Chair

Over the past year, I have been proud to see the Assembly continue to grow as a distinct and influential part of the regional NHS landscape, providing a platform for racialised leaders to shape discussions and influence change across workforce and patient-facing priorities.

We have successfully leveraged the power of both the steering group and our membership to guide NHS organisations in embedding anti-racism.

With continued support for the adoption of the Anti-racist Framework and encouraging collaboration across Trusts and Integrated Care Boards, we can ensure that organisations are not only implementing the basics but also embedding anti-racism into leadership, commissioning and workforce strategies.

I am proud of what the Assembly has achieved so far, and I am excited about the opportunity to strengthen its strategic influence further.

Our work is about turning ambition into tangible change: addressing racial inequalities, ensuring inclusion is woven through the fabric of organisations and systems, and making a real difference for staff, patients and communities.

Racism and discrimination remain deeply ingrained within the social, political and economic fabric of our society, and their effects continue to be felt by staff and communities across the NHS.

If we are to dismantle structures that are systematically racist, the work starts with us - with those who hold influence and drive strategy. Race equality matters, and the Assembly provides a vital vehicle for collective leadership to make it happen.

Meet our Director

Having joined the Assembly in January 2025, I've been fully focused on building on the strong foundations set by brilliant colleagues Sharmila Kar, Antemeka Cobin-Wilson and Harvi Higgs who have moved on to new roles.

We've recruited a new team (more from them on the next page!) and, in the context of a changing NHS, we've focused on maintaining momentum and impact on race equity.



Ayo Barley

Director, NHS North West Race Equity Assembly

Our priority remains embedding the Anti-racist Framework, with a focus on continuous improvement. This includes commissioning an independent evaluation of its impact to understand what is working well and where more attention is needed.

We've also explored opportunities to work in partnership with organisations like the NHS North West Leadership Academy to embed anti-racism as widely as possible across our systems and strengthen the competencies of our system leaders.

I have connected with colleagues across the North West who share a commitment to advancing racial equality. Together, we have explored areas where our impact can be strengthened, and identified where further progress is required.

We remain committed to anti-racism principles that challenge the status quo and take meaningful action to dismantle the structures and systems that perpetuate disparities across our communities.

On behalf of the Assembly, I would like to take the opportunity to extend our sincere thanks to Raj Jain, former Assembly Steering Group Chair, who stepped down from his role in October 2025, alongside his tenure as Chair of NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB. We recognise and deeply appreciate his dedicated service and lasting contribution to advancing race equity within the NHS.

I would also like to extend my thanks to our Co-chairs, Steering Group Chair, the steering group and our members for their ongoing support, guidance and championing of our agenda. Their leadership and dedication continue to drive the Assembly's influence and help shape a more inclusive and equitable NHS.

As we finalise and share plans for 2026-2027, I'm feeling energised by the collective challenge ahead and would urge all leaders to join us. By working collaboratively, we can continue to embed anti-racism across the NHS in the North West and ensure real, tangible improvements for both staff and the communities we serve.

Meet the Assembly team



Sonia Sarah

Programmes and Partnerships Manager

Reducing inequalities by being boldly and unapologetically anti-racist is at the heart of the

NHS North West Race Equity Assembly's ethos, core values and vision. We want to collaboratively level the playing field and deliver an equitable world for all.

I joined the Assembly in November on secondment from Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, bringing with me 20 years' experience in equality, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism and social justice work.

My background has helped me effectively lead on the Anti-racist Framework programme (ARF) and I am heartened that we've received a record level of interest from new Trusts and NHS organisations who want to get on board.

This collective commitment drives our mission forward, ensuring that systemic change is not just a goal, but a reality. I have valued the opportunities to develop partnerships and contribute to new programme initiatives, and it has been particularly rewarding to help establish consistent standards and foster a sense of shared accountability across organisations.

Representing the Assembly as a strong advocate for collaboration and inclusive workplaces has been a real highlight, alongside supporting tangible progress towards fairer working environments and improved experiences for both staff and the communities they serve.

Together, we are helping to ensure that every voice is heard, valued and amplified.



Saraj Mohammed

Membership and Business Support Officer

Joining the Assembly as Membership and Business Support Officer is both a professional opportunity and a personal responsibility. Early on, I supported the Anti-racist Framework Discovery Event with the North West Leadership Academy. Key takeaways were the need for spaces where honesty is welcomed and leaders engage with equity-driven change. Infrastructure and values must work hand in hand.

I particularly enjoy supporting Assembly and Steering Group meetings, facilitating the Anti-racist Framework, and compiling purposeful member communications. Stepping into this role has shown me that leadership is not always visible - it's often about enabling others to lead well and ensuring this impact is felt by all.

Our mission in action

The NHS North West Race Equity Assembly is defined by a singular, unwavering stance: we are unapologetically anti-racist.

Our mission is not merely to acknowledge the existence of racial bias, but to dismantle the systems that allow it to persist. We exist to move beyond the rhetoric of 'inclusion' and into the active work of challenging discrimination of every kind.

Our work is rooted in the belief that passive observation is a form of complicity. Consequently, the Assembly has evolved into a strategic, independent and authoritative voice committed to transforming the NHS into an environment where fairness is the default and systemic racism is eradicated through decisive, high-level action.

However, we are clear that we are not the default delivery body for anti-racism work that individual NHS organisations must lead themselves. Instead, our refreshed mandate reaffirms our role in shaping policy, building capability and holding the system to account as a key feature of regional performance management and oversight.

By amplifying the voices of the marginalised and forcing a confrontation with longstanding inequalities, we are leading a bold agenda for structural change.

In the following pages, we invite you to explore how our steering group members are bringing this mission to life with real-world impact. These examples of our mission in action demonstrate our ongoing push for an NHS that is truly equitable, just and free from discrimination.



Tackling racism and discrimination – a regional perspective



Abid Dar
Regional Head of Inclusion and Engagement (Retention and Experience)
Joint Lead - People and Culture Directorate, NHS England - North West

As lead on regional EDI and retention strategies, I've realised that racism evolves, is fluid, it shapeshifts and is chameleonic and evasive. It has morphed and evolved to include nationalism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-migrant sentiment and beyond. It's easier to see and harder to catch. Social media has allowed it to deepen its presence and impact and spiral out of control.

Here in the North West, we are consciously and actively lifting the lid on poor practices, behaviours and actions around racism and discrimination. NHS England is setting the EDI-mandated standards and strong expectations, while enabling meaningful partnerships with Trusts and providers.

We follow policies and guidance that give us useful direction in tackling racism and discrimination in all forms.

Our Leadership Equality Assurance Framework (LEAF) gives us a strengths-based, peer-led platform to understand our regional performance, celebrate success and identify the needs we can support. Within this, areas of sexual safety, recruitment, violence prevention reduction and harassment are all covered.

Our Staff Survey, EDI Improvement Plan, Workforce Race Equality Standards, Ethnicity Pay Gap and reducing Health Inequalities requirements all identify key challenges and set the benchmark for measured anti-racism progress.

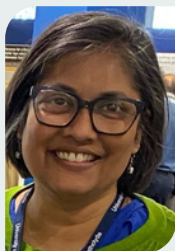
From Spring 2026, the new NHSE Staff Standards will drive further improvements with its overt 'Tackling Racism' requirements. And at the same time a new Regional Blueprint will oversee and drive anti-racism improvements.



How pharmacy is embedding inclusion and anti-racism

Pharmacy professionals across the North West have been embedding inclusion – including anti-racism – in a practical, evidence-informed and sustainable way.

The North West Inclusive Pharmacy Practice (IPP) Toolkit was launched in May 2025, offering a practical resource designed to support pharmacy teams to embed inclusive and anti-racist practices within everyday clinical care, workforce development and leadership.



Dr Devina Halsall

Deputy Chief Pharmacist (Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer), NHS England - North West

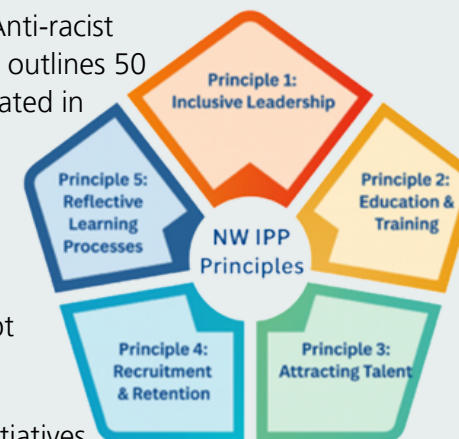


Sadie Pinkney

Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, University of Liverpool

Aligned to both the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly Anti-racist Framework and pharmacy professional standards, the toolkit outlines 50 recommended initiatives across five core principles demonstrated in the graphic (right).

The toolkit also includes a progress tracker and executive summary enabling organisations to self-assess, identify gaps and prioritise actions for implementation. Each initiative is accompanied by a suggested timeline, with flexibility to adapt to local organisational context.



Following consultation and early implementation, 41 new initiatives were implemented across 18 NHS Trusts within the first months of publication. Examples include rota scheduling that accommodates religious observances, introduction of inclusive recruitment checklists and the delivery of education and training on cultural competence (ranging from undergraduate learners to senior leaders).

Regional and national engagement has been strengthened through the NW IPP Steering Group, which plays a central role in producing, reviewing and sustaining the toolkit. The group consists of 18 members, representing hospital, community, primary care, academia and commissioning. In addition, a national IPP roundtable was held at Clinical Pharmacy Congress North, which brought together key stakeholders to share learning and explore opportunities for wider adoption of anti-racism and inclusive practice.

Ongoing evaluation will assess implementation and impact as adoption increases across systems. This includes understanding how the toolkit contributes to improved workforce inclusivity, psychological safety and equitable career progression, as well as its role in supporting more culturally responsive, person-centred care and reducing health inequalities for patients.



Active anti-racism at work



Naveed Sharif

Associate Director of Culture and Inclusion, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board
National NHS Muslim Network Chair

As a commissioning NHS organisation, Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB explicitly recognises that racism - structural, institutional, or interpersonal - profoundly harms staff wellbeing, patient safety and population health.

In alignment with the NHS Constitution and Equality Act 2010, we are committed to becoming an actively anti-racist organisation.

This work is embedded in our governance and strategy to ensure substantive improvement over symbolic change. A board-level executive lead holds formal accountability, providing regular progress reports to maintain transparency.

We rigorously review Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) data to inform targeted action plans addressing disparities in recruitment, promotion and disciplinary processes. By strengthening inclusive recruitment and succession planning, we are actively diversifying senior leadership and enhancing oversight of equity-related risks.

Our pursuit of Bronze status within the Anti-racist Framework reinforces that safe services depend on a workforce that feels valued. We have strengthened Freedom to Speak Up processes and confidential reporting to ensure concerns are raised without fear. We continuously monitor disciplinary data to address disproportionality, ensuring staff feel heard and confident that action follows feedback.

Positive staff survey results and improved morale contribute to workforce stability and retention - essential components of safe, effective and well-led services. By embedding equity into every level of leadership, we provide responsive care for our entire community while fostering an environment of continuous reflection and measurable progress.

"By embedding equity into every level of leadership, we provide responsive care for our entire community while fostering an environment of continuous reflection and measurable progress."



Public Health leadership in the Assembly

As North West Director of Healthcare Public Health I have had the privilege of embedding the Assembly's core values into my role.

Over the past year, my primary focus has been supporting the development of the North West's anti-racist public health collaborative, an initiative backed by all 24 Directors of Public Health across the region.



Dr Gunjit Bandesha

Director of Healthcare Public Health,
NHS England - North West

A significant milestone was the successful conference held in Preston in May 2025, which framed racism as a structural determinant of health and forged vital links between the Assembly and the wider workforce. This work continues through the creation of an anti-racism consensus statement and a clear definition of 'what good looks like' to improve outcomes for the North West's global majority population.

Accurate ethnicity data is equally fundamental to addressing health inequalities. Throughout 2025–2026, the North West Public Health Directorate led national and regional efforts to improve ethnicity recording, including hosting national webinars and aligning activity with NHS England's improvement plan. Our analysis revealed significant performance inconsistencies across providers; consequently, with executive agreement, we are now embedding ethnicity recording as a core element of assurance, commissioning and oversight.

Finally, we recognise that building an anti-racist movement requires intentional, systematic learning. We invited Keisha Thompson from the Legacies of Enslavement programme to deliver an intensive two-day training session for all public health staff.

This challenging programme deepened our understanding of health inequalities, leading to the development of a cultural competency toolkit to ensure this learning informs our everyday practice.



ICB perspectives

From intention to measurable change

NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board



Majid Hussain

Director of Equality and Inclusion, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board

This year, Greater Manchester moved from intention to measurable change in tackling systemic racism.

Responding to a call by Mayor Andy Burnham, the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) launched a region-wide anti-racist campaign to protect staff, promote allyship and strengthen leadership accountability.

Key strategic pillars were introduced, including enhanced reporting in the form of a dedicated Datix Reporting Pathway for hate incidents. This structured approach allows the system to track trends and coordinate with Greater Manchester Police to improve safety and prevention.

We also have a quarterly Leadership for Inclusion programme that equips NHS leaders with practical tools to challenge bias and foster psychological safety, directly informed by diverse lived experiences.

Tackling racism is essential for safe, equitable healthcare. By addressing structural barriers, we ensure services are inclusive and responsive to those most affected by inequality. Our zero-tolerance approach is reinforced by public leadership, stronger partnerships and improved reporting.

In its commissioning role, ICB drives system-wide change, ensuring contracts and performance frameworks promote equity and culturally responsive care. Embedding these practices builds trust with patients and strengthens accountability.

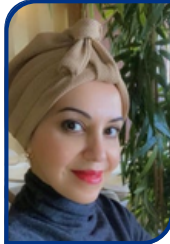
This work also transforms the staff experience. Creating psychologically safe environments improves engagement, morale and retention. By integrating anti-racist principles across leadership, commissioning and service delivery, we ensure sustainable, fair and high-quality care for everyone in Greater Manchester.





Firmly committing to anti-racism

NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board



Aisha Chaudhary

Director of Culture and Inclusion, NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board

Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board remains firmly committed to advancing anti-

racism across our health and care system. Our belief is that tackling racism is fundamental to creating a culture where colleagues from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds feel valued, safe and able to thrive.

We also believe that a firm anti-racist stance, and action, is critical to our wider ambition to reduce health inequalities across the North West, where many communities continue to experience poorer health outcomes and barriers to accessing services. Listening to lived experience and acting on it must remain central to how we lead change.

"Listening to lived experience and acting on it must remain central to how we lead change."

The Assembly plays an important role in driving this agenda forward. By bringing together staff voices, system partners and community insight, it helps challenge inequity in the workplace while strengthening our collective efforts to improve outcomes for the communities we serve.

Building stronger relationships with local partners and communities is essential if we are to create inclusive services, improve experiences of care, and foster greater trust.

"Building stronger relationships with local partners and communities is essential if we are to create inclusive services, improve experiences of care, and foster greater trust."

Anti-racism is therefore not a standalone initiative, but a core part of building a fairer, more inclusive health and care system across our region.

Advancing anti-racism

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board



Thomasina Afful

Associate Director Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board remains firmly committed to implementing the principles and priorities of the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly, recognising its vital role in driving meaningful and sustained progress on race equality across the system.

Despite significant systemwide challenges over the past 12 months, which have necessitated a refocusing of organisational priorities, tangible progress to advance race equality outcomes has been achieved.

This includes, but is not limited to, seven provider Trusts (circa 50%) across our system achieving Anti-racist Framework Bronze recognition and now actively working towards securing Silver. This represents a clear commitment from provider leadership to embed anti-racist practice, accountability and cultural change across NHS organisations.

In addition, the ICB collaborated with the Liverpool City Region Race Equality Hub,

GraceHOLA Ltd and the NHS North West Leadership Academy to deliver a targeted leadership shadowing programme, supporting 50 ethnically diverse aspiring leaders to access structured career development opportunities. Participants were paired with 50 senior leaders drawn from across public, education, private and charitable sector organisations, strengthening cross-sector learning, visibility and progression pathways.

While recognising that considerable challenges remain, these achievements reflect the ICB's continued commitment to anti-racism as a core enabler of improved organisational culture, leadership and system performance. It's also central to building trust with our diverse communities and partners, enabling more effective engagement, co-production and service design that better reflect local needs. These are two reasons why NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB remain committed to this work and to working in partnership with the Assembly, regional colleagues and system partners to accelerate progress towards racial equity and inclusive organisational cultures across the North West.



Anti-racist Framework

In June 2023, our Anti-racist Framework was re-launched. Designed to enable effective challenge of racism and discrimination in the NHS, the framework takes individuals and organisations through a learning journey that begins at fear of change right through to the growth zone.

The framework is underpinned by:

- The principles of prioritising anti-racism
- Understanding lived experience
- Growing inclusive leaders
- Acting to tackle inequalities
- Reviewing and reflecting on progress.

It also sets out actions that can be used to embed anti-racist practices organisation-wide.



Three levels of achievement

The framework is organised into three levels of achievement: Bronze, Silver and Gold. Each level builds on the next, encouraging incremental changes and consistent actions towards eliminating racial discrimination within organisations.



Signifies that an organisation has taken initial steps towards becoming an intentionally anti-racist organisation. These deliverables are those that embed structures and accountability for the delivery of racial equity in an organisation.



Shows that organisations have embedded structures to ensure commitment and accountability towards achieving anti-racism and have also developed actions to nurture and empower Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic talent, encourage culture change and improve data collection, quality and reporting.



Organisations can demonstrate that anti-racism has been embedded at all levels, with diverse representation at the most senior levels and parity in staff experience, as well as ensuring anti-racism is seen as being everyone's business through performance and engagement.



Expansion of the Anti-racist Framework

To date, over 90% of NHS Trusts in the North West have committed to the Anti-racist Framework and are at various stages in their journey to achieving Bronze recognition. The region's three Integrated Care Boards - Greater Manchester, Lancashire and South Cumbria, and Cheshire and Merseyside - are implementing the framework, as well as the NHS England - North West region.

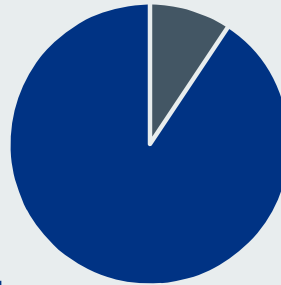


Nearly half (48%) of the committed NHS organisations across the North West region have been formally awarded Anti-racist Framework (ARF) Bronze recognition and have sent a clear signal of intent to challenge racism and discrimination within their organisations.

This momentum is set to accelerate as we enter Spring 2026 with a record number of organisations interested in gaining Bronze recognition.

Later this year, we will launch a roadmap of readiness for Silver ARF Expressions of Interest. This preparatory phase will pave the way for a formal Spring 2027 launch of Silver status, providing a clear trajectory for organisations to move beyond foundational commitment toward advanced, sustained impact.

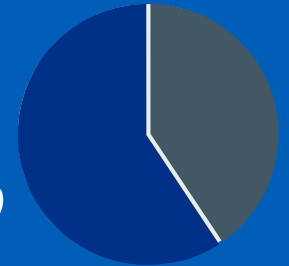
90%



of NHS North West organisations have committed to the Anti-racist Framework

So far

48%



have achieved Bronze recognition

NHS North West Trusts committed to the Anti-racist Framework

NHS North West Region

- North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust

NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB

- Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust
- Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust
- Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- East Cheshire NHS Trust
- University Hospitals of Liverpool Group formerly:
 - Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
 - Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
 - Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust (formerly Warrington and Halton and Bridgewater NHS FTs)
- Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

- Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Greater Manchester ICB

- Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust
- Stockport NHS Foundation Trust
- Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust
- The Christie NHS Foundation Trust
- Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust
- Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust
- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust
- Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB

- Blackpool Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

- Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust
- Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust

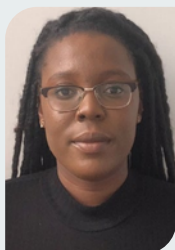


Anti-racism in action

Using the ARF as a foundation for consistency

Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust

The Anti-racist Framework (ARF) provides vital clarity on what 'good' looks like: robust board-level oversight, transparent progress measures and high levels of scrutiny. This ensures that commitments translate into meaningful change for both staff and patients.



Lisa Shoko

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Programme Lead, Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust

At Liverpool Women's University Hospital, we introduced an Anti-Racism Hub prior to the Framework's release. The Framework provided a directive and aspirational lever that gave our existing work greater structure and legitimacy. Crucially, it recognises that there is no single prescribed methodology; organisations can demonstrate anti-racism through various approaches, provided they are well-led, rigorously assessed and built on the right principles.

By aligning our Hub with wider architecture, we challenged the assumption that equity work is unquantifiable. Our approach is deliberately tied to good governance, evidence systems and workforce metrics. This model was recognised as best practice by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and has led to commissioned regional work addressing disproportionate referrals to the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

The Framework offers a necessary shared baseline. If standardised nationally, it could become a powerful instrument for ensuring anti-racism is systematic and embedded rather than episodic. A workforce that feels safe and fairly treated is better placed to deliver the equitable care patients deserve.

Ultimately, the Framework demonstrates that anti-racism is a core component of workforce integrity. As a foundation for consistency, it ensures that the standards we apply to anti-racism match the quality of care we aim to provide.

Building an anti-racist future

Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (MWL) has used its journey to Anti-racist Framework Bronze recognition to transform culture, and ensure dignity, fairness and safety for every patient and staff member.

The Trust has embedded anti-racism into the core of its clinical and operational functions, marking a pivotal shift from policy to tangible systemic change.



Key milestones toward building an anti-racist future include:

- Workforce empowerment: Band 5 BAME Nurse and Midwife Career Progression Workshops have yielded immediate results. Following sessions, six colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds successfully secured promotions (five to Band 6 and one to Band 7) directly addressing historical disparities in career advancement.
- Clinical equity: In November 2025, MWL launched the Maternity Triage Passport. This initiative provides an alternative pathway for women facing language barriers, allowing them to bypass phone-based triage and access life-saving care directly.
- Development of an Inclusive Language Guide to promote respectful, accurate and inclusive communication across MWL.
- Cultural accountability: The formal launch of the Trust's Anti-Racism Statement - developed via roundtable consultations with the BAME Staff Network and patients - sets a clear standard for behaviour and strategic direction.

Impact is being sustained through an Equality and Health Inequalities Council, ensuring high-level oversight. With the implementation of the Saving Lives, Improving Mothers' Care bundle and ongoing 'active bystander' training, MWL is not just reacting to discrimination but proactively dismantling it.

"This achievement reflects the dedication of colleagues who drive systemic change. It strengthens our resolve to ensure dignity and fairness are embedded in everything we do."

MWL Senior Leadership

Through these targeted actions, MWL is creating a more compassionate environment, earning the trust of its diverse community, and setting a regional benchmark for inclusive healthcare.

"Self-confident to apply for another role" - feedback from Band 5 career progression workshop participant.

Accelerating equity

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (WWL) is using the Anti-racist Framework to embed fairness and equity into its foundational DNA.

Driven by Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) data and the lived experiences of 'Global Majority' colleagues, the Trust adopted the Anti-racist Framework to dismantle systemic barriers and meet the needs of its local population.

WWL has moved beyond passive inclusion towards active anti-racism by synchronising leadership accountability with frontline empowerment.

Anti-racism is now a governance priority, with a dedicated EDI Strategy Group chaired by the CEO. This ensures that the Anti-Racist Strategy 2025 and Zero-Tolerance Policy are not just documents, but enforced standards of conduct.

Through the Passport to Progression and Global Majority Nursing Fellowships, the Trust has provided equity-focused support that has already resulted in successful Band 7 appointments for underrepresented staff, directly improving representation in senior clinical roles.

The Trust's Health Outreach and Inclusion Service has successfully reduced health inequalities for asylum seekers and vulnerable groups by improving GP registration rates and screening uptake, ensuring equitable access to care for the most marginalised.

The Global Majority Forum has become a primary engine for change, providing leaders with deep insights into institutional barriers. By reshaping reporting processes and cultural norms based on this feedback, WWL is building a sustainable foundation where every colleague and patient is treated with unwavering dignity.

"Our Board is unequivocal in its commitment to being an actively anti-racist organisation. Anti-racism is intentionally embedded into our leadership, culture, and governance."

**Professor Dame Robina Shah,
Trust Chair**

Through these integrated actions, WWL is demonstrating that purposeful, structured anti-racism is essential for both workforce wellbeing and clinical excellence.

Reaching out - our work in South Yorkshire

In 2025–2026 we successfully piloted offering the Anti-racist Framework to South Yorkshire Trusts as part of our commitment to knowledge exchange and influencing others.

Challenging bias

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) NHS Foundation Trust is successfully transitioning from intention to active anti-racism by engaging with the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly Anti-racist Framework (ARF).

Recognising the profound link between systemic racism, health inequalities and staff experience, DBTH sought a rigorous, evidence-based mechanism to challenge institutional biases.

Building on its 2021 RACE Code accreditation and subsequent EDI Improvement Plans, the Trust adopted the Anti-racist Framework to ensure deep accountability and sustainable cultural transformation.

DBTH has successfully integrated targeted anti-racist actions into its overarching strategy, aligning directly with the NHS High Impact Actions. This involved launching focused workstreams on inclusive recruitment, career progression and board-level development, alongside reciprocal mentoring programmes that bridge the gap between frontline staff and senior leaders.

These initiatives have secured ARF Bronze recognition, positioning DBTH as a leader within the South Yorkshire system.

The impact is evident in the establishment of a ‘shared language’ across the Trust, which has facilitated honest, vital conversations about race and privilege. Early indicators show improved staff survey scores regarding belonging and fairness, alongside strengthened governance.

As leadership affirms, becoming an actively anti-racist organisation is fundamental to creating a culture where staff feel safe and valued. Through activating the Anti-racist Framework, DBTH has successfully turned an institutional commitment into tangible action for the benefit of both its workforce and the diverse communities it serves.

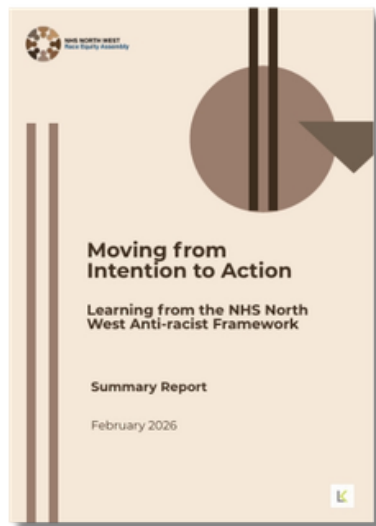


Continuous improvement

Listening and learning – NHS North West’s commitment to systemic change

Over the past year, the North West region has deepened its commitment to systemic change. To measure progress, an independent evaluation carried out by Liberating Knowledge captured insights from a survey of 274 staff and a specialist focus group.

The review highlighted that while the Anti-racist Framework provides essential structure and legitimacy, awareness remains uneven. It's high among senior leaders but lower on the frontline.



Front cover of the Liberating Knowledge review.

Critical challenges persist, including:

- Limited staff confidence in reporting mechanisms
- Gaps in organisational capability to respond to racial harm
- Barriers such as competing priorities and inconsistent leadership accountability.

However, where the Framework is fully embraced, it acts as a vital bridge between intent and action. But the evaluation also found that driving change often falls on individuals without sufficient authority, highlighting a need for dedicated roles and resourced staff networks.

To ensure anti-racism remains core organisational business, our focus shifts to:

- Refining the Framework: Simplifying submissions and clarifying expectations
- Expanding capability: Strengthening regional peer networks and providing practical tools for frontline staff
- Data-driven progress: Improving evaluation metrics to help organisations track and demonstrate real-world impact.

We recognise the growth of the Framework and are committed to making improvements to ensure it remains a tool that leads to meaningful change in tackling racism across our system.

***See page 32 for details of our plans to continually improve the Anti-racist Framework**

Read the full summary report [here](#)

Advocacy in action

Amplifying voices and driving change

For Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities across the North West, advocacy is not an abstract principle. It's a necessity for ensuring that lived experience shapes decision-making and that health systems are held accountable for equitable outcomes.

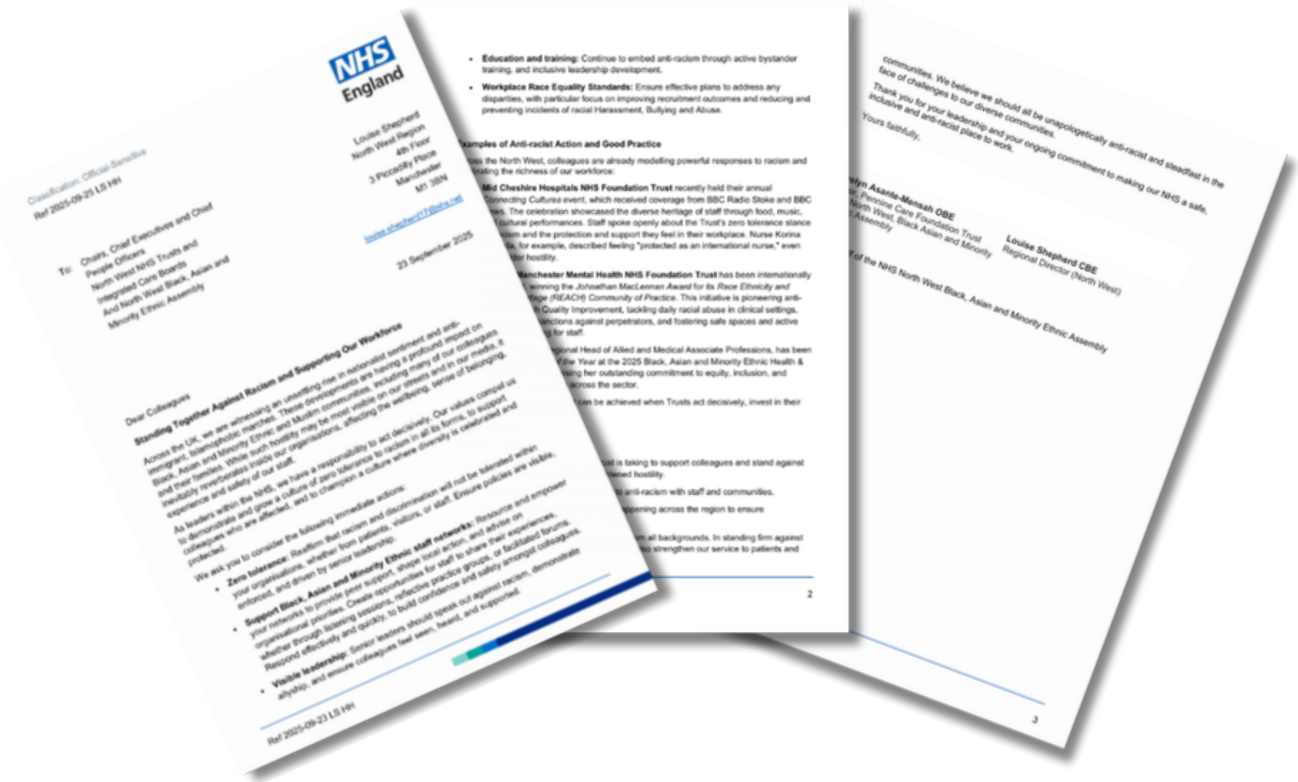
Over the past year, the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly has acted as a powerful collective voice during a period of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment and widening inequalities.

Through sustained engagement with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and NHS Trusts, our advocacy has extended beyond simply raising concerns to influencing tangible, systemic change.

Why advocacy matters

Structural inequality within health and care systems is widespread, appearing in disparities in access, experience and representation. For many communities, trust in institutions has been eroded by experiences of discrimination and biases.

Without this sustained challenge, inequities risk becoming invisible, but with it, systems are pushed to reflect and reform. Our advocacy is grounded in frontline insight, which is elevated strategically to senior leaders through formal correspondence.





Our advocacy in practice

Part of our advocacy work focused on the impact of hostile public discourse on the psychological safety of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and patients. Rather than asking for statements, we invited Trusts to demonstrate intentional anti-racist action.

This has spearheaded detailed work with specific Trusts to examine workforce data and review governance. Through these actions, we have secured substantive responses from leaders, established direct dialogue with decision-makers and embedded our Anti-racist Framework as a tool for improvement.

Impact and influence

By speaking with a unified voice, the NHS North West Race Equity Assembly has reinforced that our diverse communities are key stakeholders in shaping an equitable future for the North West. Our collective leadership has moved the conversation from intent to measurable practice, ensuring that race equity remains a priority at the highest levels of the system.

Looking ahead

We will continue to amplify lived experience, challenge systems and work alongside leaders committed to meaningful change. For every marginalised community across the region – and beyond - our advocacy will ensure voices are heard and continue to bring about much-needed change.

Our partnerships

Racism is not always conscious, explicit or readily visible; it's often systemic and structural, embedded in the policies, practices and beliefs that shape our organisational cultures. Therefore, to address it requires a coordinated, system-wide response to tackle the inequalities that persist across the NHS.

Over the past 12 months, we have strengthened partnerships with like-minded organisations to amplify our collective impact and drive meaningful change.

A key milestone in 2025–2026 has been the establishment of our strategic partnership with the NHS North West Leadership Academy. Read on to find out more about progress to date and priorities for the year ahead.





Leadership Academy

North West

Strengthening inclusive North West leadership

Our strategic partnership with the North West Race Equity Assembly continues to be one of the most purposeful and intentional collaborations in our regional leadership work.



Lorna Krisson
Senior System Lead,
NHS North West
Leadership Academy



Dr Frances Dodd
Head of the
NHS North West
Leadership Academy

Together, we are committed to strengthening an inclusive North West leadership community where race equity, compassion and belonging thrive. Our partnership vision and ambition is clear – we strive to educate, advocate and take joint action to eliminate racism.

The partnership supports the alignment of strategic drivers, with the aim of catalysing regional goals and collective impact on anti-racism and leadership development.

Over the last year, our work together has expanded significantly. Collaborative initiatives include:

- The **formation of a working group**, with representatives from the Assembly Steering Group, NHS England North West and NHS North West Leadership Academy (NHS NWLA) to bring together joint expertise, identify regional priorities and critical allyship. The group co-created a strategic vision and partnership agreement to actively promote and champion collective ways of working. The working group has been instrumental in shaping conversations about representation, capability building and equity of opportunity within leadership pathways.

- Co-produced **joint events and thought-leadership** such as a [podcast on anti-racist leadership practice](#); a [virtual masterclass on Powerful Allyship](#); and Ayo Barley, Director of the NW Race Equity Assembly, contributed as a panel member at the NHS NWLA’s annual Festival of Leadership conference that celebrates progress, connects leaders and inspires action towards a shared vision for inclusive, compassionate and system-wide leadership.
- **Sharing and maximising resources** based on our individual organisation’s established positions, joint communications channels, and capturing best practice.

Looking ahead, our collaboration will continue to focus on building leadership capability that reflects the rich diversity of the North West. Together, we will further enhance leadership development approaches in real-world insight, challenge structural barriers and co-design opportunities that respond directly to the needs and experiences of diverse communities.

Read on to find out about the NHS NWLA and NHS North West Race Equity Assembly’s commitments for the next 12 months.



Our commitment for the next 12 months includes:

- Jointly hosting a regional conference on Driving Race Equity – strategies for anti-racism health and care systems.
- Exploring tailored anti-racist board development and regional anti-racism advocacy.
- Capitalising on opportunities to shape the North West system where diversity is not just acknowledged, but actively valued in decision-making and leadership practice.

Through the Assembly’s guidance, we are also committed to enhancing our internal practice on anti-racism and will be seeking Anti-racist Framework Bronze accreditation during 2026-2027.

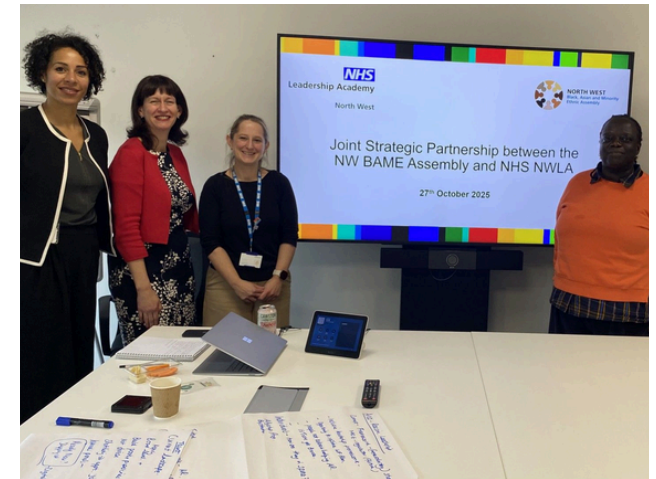
We are really proud of what we have achieved together so far – and we are even more excited for what we will continue to achieve as collaborative partners.



Festival of Leadership Panel, October 2025



NHS NWLA Anti-racist Framework discovery session, Feb 2026



Left to right: Ayo Barley, Sally Senior, Lorna Krisson, Evelyn Asante-Mensah, October 2025



Ayo Barley and Lorna Krisson in the Leadership Live studio, October 2025

Recognition and awards

'Unsung hero' Evelyn celebrates



In the past year we celebrated our co-chair Evelyn Asante-Mensah OBE winning an Unsung Heroes Award from the Advancing Ethnic Minority Women into Leadership Roles within Health and Social Care network.

Evelyn's tireless advocacy, principled leadership and commitment to social and racial justice have opened doors for colleagues, amplified minoritised voices and supported the underserved. She tirelessly continues to mentor, listen and uplift others.

Angela Assor, event organiser and host endorsing the award, said: "We celebrate Evelyn Asante-Mensah for her dedication, achievements and the inspiration she brings to those around her. Her journey is a testament to what is possible through hard work, courage and purpose."

Anti-racist Initiative Award 2025

The NHS North West Race Equity Assembly was highly commended in the Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN) Annual Black History Month Gala Anti-Racist Initiative Award 2025.

The commendation recognises the Assembly's ongoing work to challenge and eliminate racism across systems and institutions, and its continued leadership in advancing anti-racist practice.



Looking ahead

Using five strategic pillars to strengthen our position

Our ambition for 2026-2027 is to embed the Assembly's refreshed role through delivery of its five strategic pillars, strengthening its position as a strategic advisory, advocacy and influencing body across the North West NHS system.

We will:

- Further embed advocacy, influence and performance oversight to hold organisations to account and inform system action
- Improve the Anti-racist Framework to assess organisational maturity and drive continuous improvement
- Grow our membership to broaden influence and ensure diverse voices shape system priorities
- Develop an Innovation Hub to share effective evidence-based approaches to tackling race inequality
- Offer anti-racist education to build board-level leadership capability, confidence and meaningful accountability.

Join our mission

We invite you to join us in advancing race equity in the NHS.

The NHS North West Race Equity Assembly welcomes ongoing engagement from NHS leaders of all backgrounds who are committed to advancing race equity across our healthcare system. We encourage individuals and organisations to connect with and support the Assembly's work as it continues to evolve.

We remain committed to sharing insight, resources and learning to support leaders, staff networks and those with responsibility for anti-racism and equality, diversity and inclusion, helping to build capability and strengthen impact across the region.

Further information about the Assembly's work, priorities and supporting resources is [available through our webpages.](#)



Email: england.nwraceequity_assembly@nhs.net

Website: www.england.nhs.uk/north-west/nhs-north-west-race-equity-assembly