BAME Women Leadership Programme

Overview, evaluation and analysis Cohorts One to Seven

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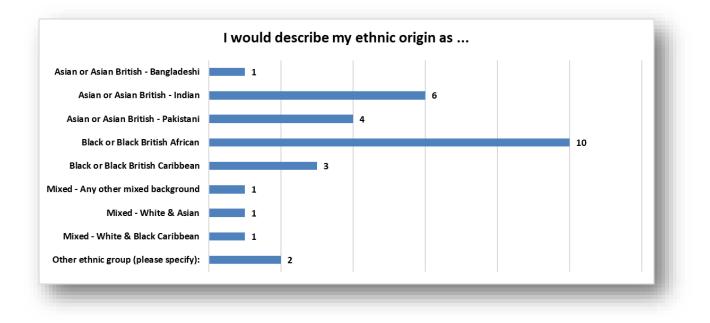
1. Introduction

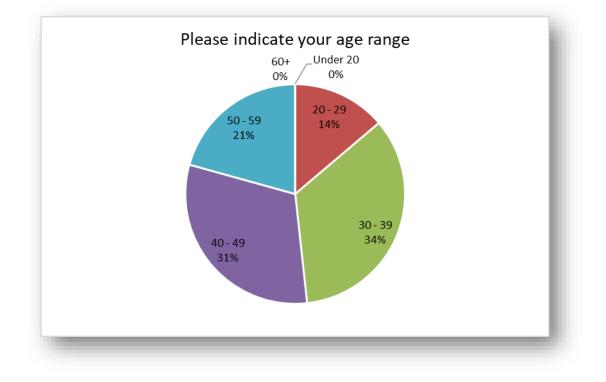
The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Leadership Programme aims to shift the dial in current initiatives to develop a more diverse leadership pipeline. Research shows that BAME women are the least likely to progress as leaders in organisations, and workforce data for the NHS in England shows a disparity in the number of BAME people in leadership positions. Women make up 76% of the NHS workforce and continue to face disparity in pay, career progression and wider opportunities, especially if they are also are of BAME heritage, which represents how intersectional identities can further complicate and disrupt the progression pathway for people.

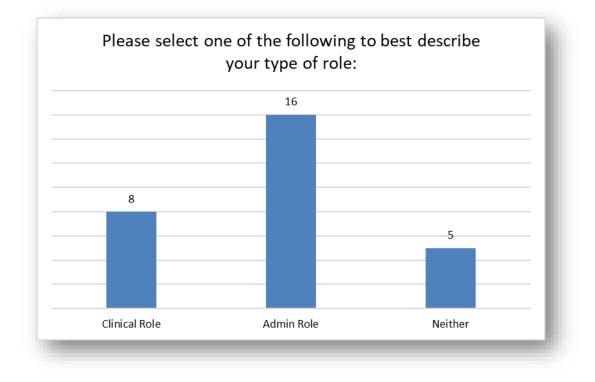
This programme was co-produced by Talent Management, Learning and Development and EDI Team in the South East. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive demonstrating that there is a gap in the NHS career development offer for BAME women in the NHS.

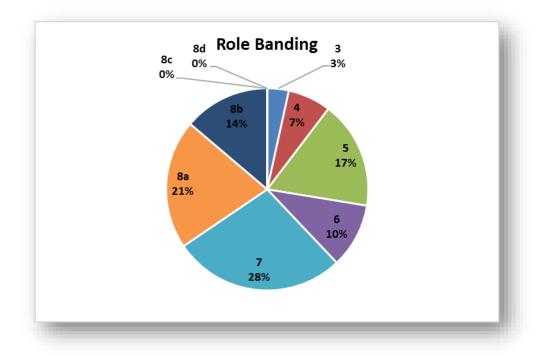
2. Enrolment summary cohorts 1 to 3

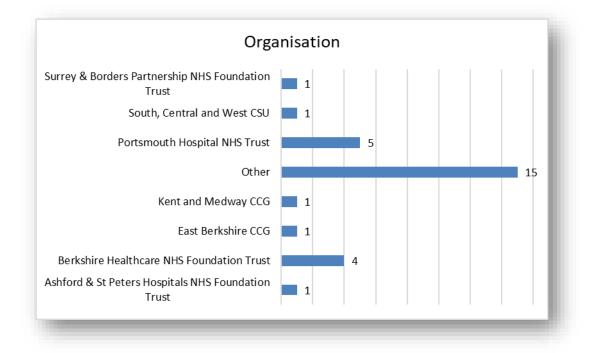
Participants came from a cross-section of ethnic groups as shown in the chart below. There was a good cross-section by age which is useful for cross-generational learning. Bands varied which also provided rich opportunities for learning about different career paths.

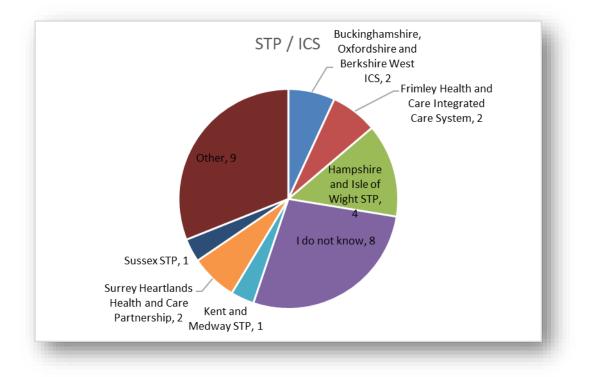




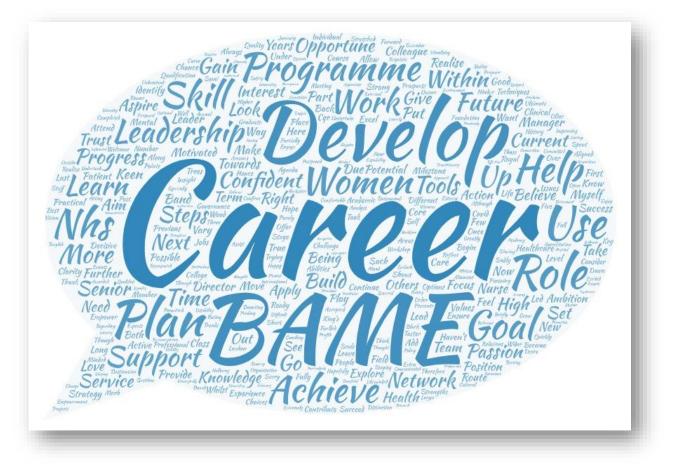








We asked, "Why are you applying to this programme?". Most responded, 'career progression' and 'confidence'. The group felt that the programme would enable them to be more strategic in their approach to their careers, and to clarify their next career steps.

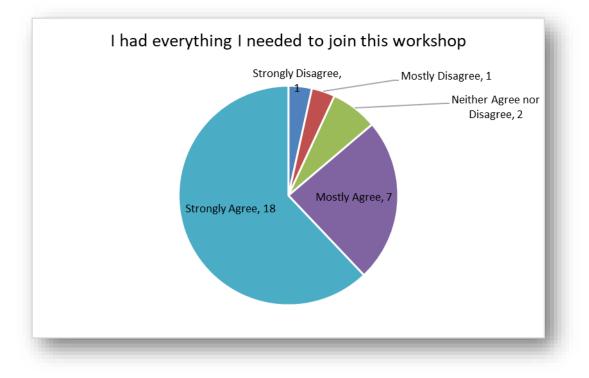


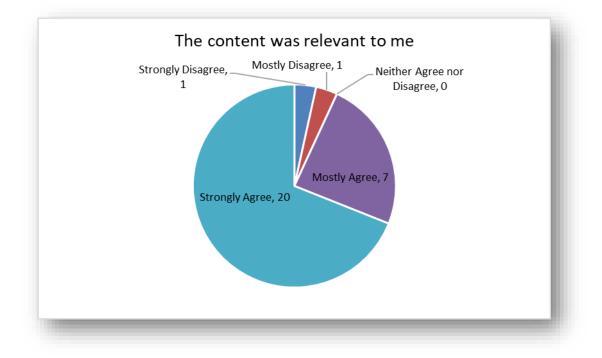
- "I have been in my current team for 5 years. I'm too comfortable here. I know I am not being challenged or stretched. I know that I am ready to take on more and different but I would welcome support in working out what to do next and how to achieve it."
- "My ultimate ambitions and aspirations are high ... however I am uncertain of the destination and steps to get there ... I am however passionate to progress the BAME agenda and am part of the BAME Network; my previous managers and colleagues believe I have the capability to succeed and excel with the right support in place"
- "I feel that I do not have the requisite skills, confidence and cultural knowledge to progress in the NHS although I have spent time increasing the number of my qualifications and trying to get on higher band jobs."
- "I'd like to have the opportunity to explore my values, goals and career prospects with other BAME women."
- "As a black African woman, I would like to contribute towards raising the visibility and profile of BAME women in senior leadership roles and board rooms in the Healthcare industry. I have a keen interest in empowerment of BAME colleagues and am a BAME network member in my Trust."

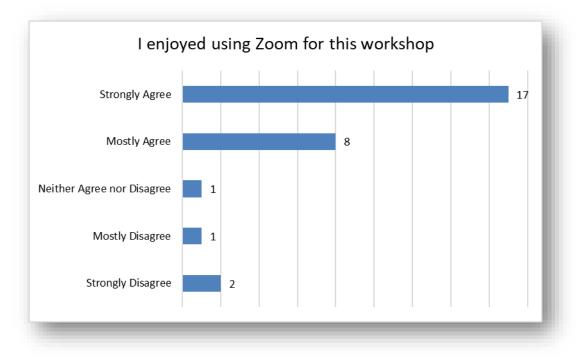
• "I'm applying to empower myself as an individual and also be able to empower other BAME future women leader. I believe being able to take part will give me the right tools to help achieve my ambitions and empower other women to move forward and have more BAME Women leaders"

3. Evaluation Thresholds workshop cohorts 1 to 3

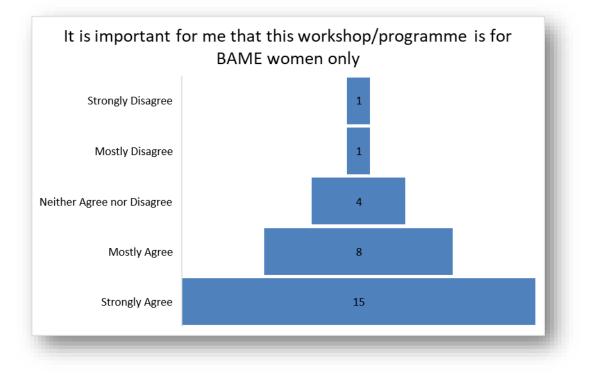
Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with a series of questions about the workshop. Most participants strongly agreed that they had everything they needed to join the session, and that the content of the workshop was relevant to them. They largely agreed that they enjoyed using Zoom for the workshop, though there was a comment later in the free text questions about technical issues affecting the breakout rooms, which may have influenced those who did not agree.

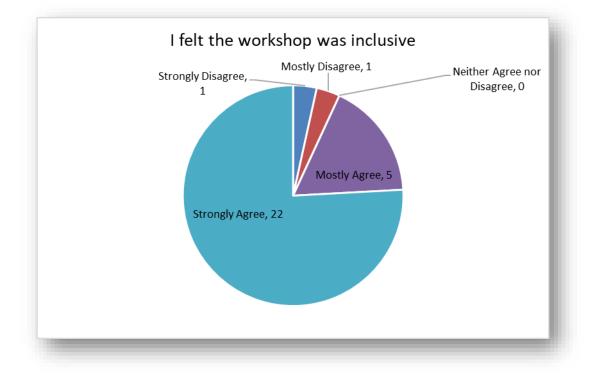


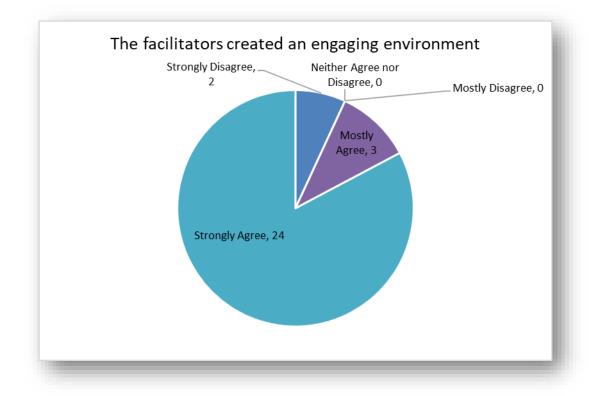




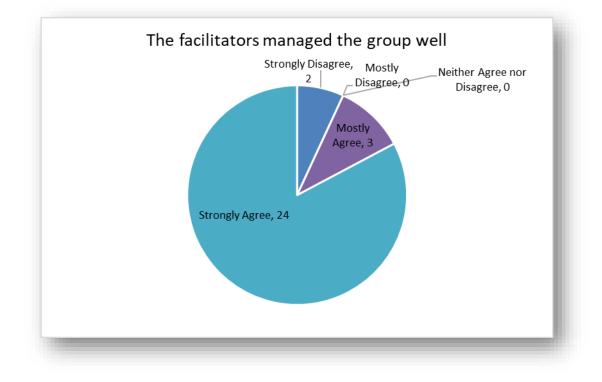
Most participants strongly agreed that it was important to them that the workshop and/or the program was restricted to BAME women. 27 participants agreed that the workshop was inclusive.

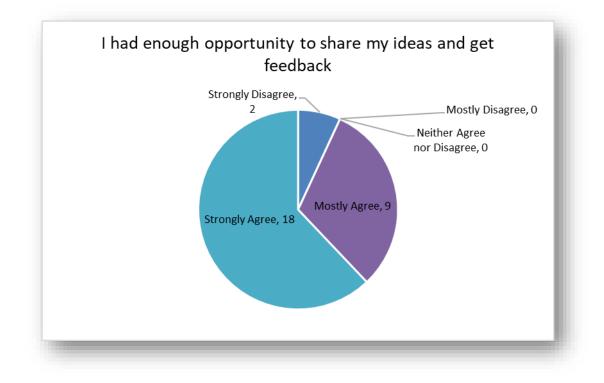




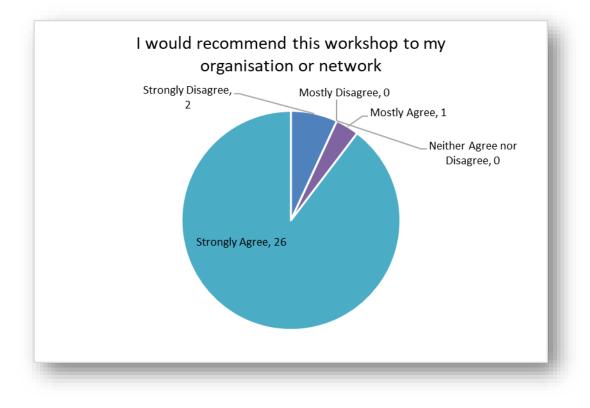


The majority of statements around facilitation of the workshop were strongly agreed with, and participants agreed that they had enough opportunity to share ideas and feedback.





Most participants strongly agreed with the statement that they would recommend the workshop to others.

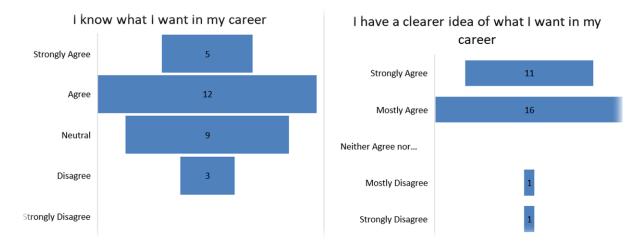


4. End of programme evaluation cohorts 1 to 3

At enrolment on the programme, the participants were asked to consider their confidence in their career and its progression by grading statements on a 5-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. These were revisited after the workshop.

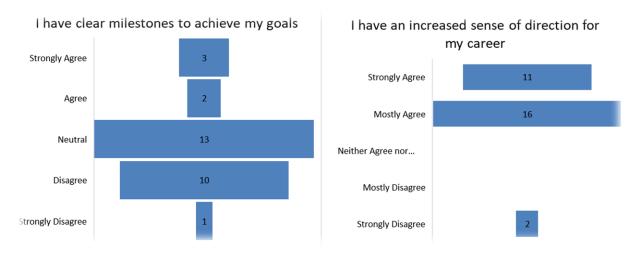
I know what I want in my career / I have a clearer idea of what I want in my career

Before the program, 17 attendees felt that they knew what they wanted in their career, 9 were neutral and 3 did not know. Following the programme, most attendees agreed that they have a clearer idea about what they want in their careers.



I have clear milestones to achieve my goals / I have an increased sense of direction for my career

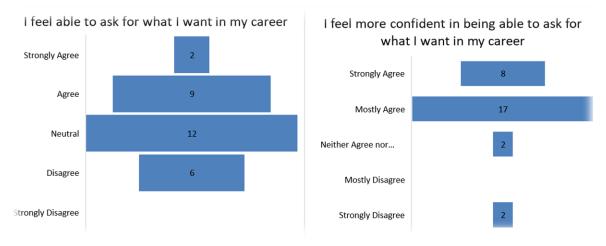
Prior to the workshop, only 5 people felt that they had clear milestones for their goals. Again, this was a strong reason many had applied for this programme, and so it is positive to see that almost all felt an increased sense of direction following the workshop.



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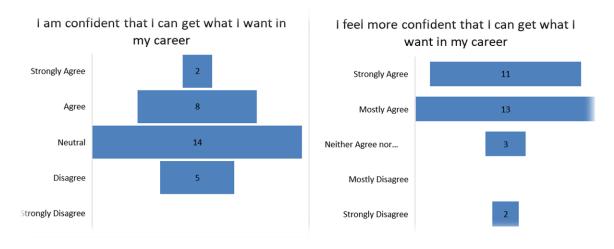
I feel able to ask for what I want in my career / I feel more confident in being able to ask for what I want in my career

11 people felt able to ask for what they want in their career before attending the workshop. 12 were neutral and 6 disagreed. Following the workshop, confidence levels were higher, with only 2 people remaining neutral and 25 now agreeing that they feel more confident in being able to ask for what they want in their careers.



I am confident that I can get what I want in my career / I feel more confident that I can get what I want in my career

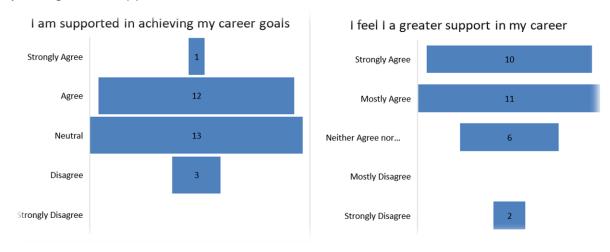
The majority of attendees were neutral about their confidence in getting what they want in their careers initially. 10 were confident, and 5 were not. Following the workshop, 2 who disagreed were now neutral, one remained neutral, and 24 now agreed that they feel more confident.



I am supported in achieving my career goals / I feel I a greater support in my career

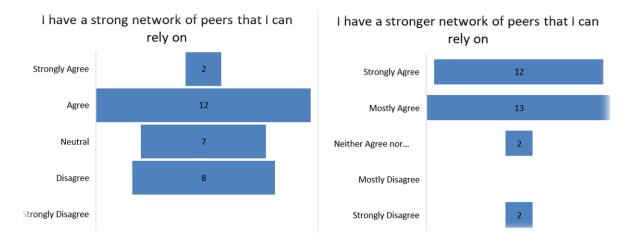
When considering the support they receive to achieve career goals, the women who agreed that they have support before the programme (13) was the same as those who were neutral, and 3 did not feel supported. The number of neutral opinions regarding

having greater support after the workshop was a little more than halved, and 21 now felt they had greater support in their career.



I have a strong network of peers that I can rely on / I have a stronger network of peers that I can rely on

Coming into the programme, almost half (14) of the participants felt that they had a strong network of peers to rely on. 7 were neutral and 8 felt that they had no strong network of peers. Reflecting on this after the workshop, 25 of the attendees now agreed that they have a strong network of peers, and 2 were neutral. This was also reflected in some of the later free text comments around the experience, with 6 women specifically highlighting the networking aspects of the program as most valuable.



The attendees were finally given some open-ended questions to gather their feedback about the overall experience of the programme: what they'd like to see improved, what they found most valuable, and what further support they might need for their careers.

Please comment on any aspect of the programme experience that you would like to see improved.

Many comments indicated that the participants would like more time on this program, with suggestions of splitting it over 2 days to allow for reflection between the first and second

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parts of the course, and also ensuring every attendee was asked to contribute to the interactive parts of the session – rather than a small number responding each time.



- "Involvement of field specific expert with same background who can guide or direct"
- "Not my personal comment, but in my group, it was observed that they would have preferred full BAME facilitator"
- "Perhaps a bit more time to think about our responses would have been good, as it felt a bit rushed at the end, maybe it could be over spread across 2 days? However, the benefit was that we had to make a decision, which also has merit!"
- "Possibly asking attendees to prepare a brief of their goals/ambitions in advance and spend more time during the sessions developing the detail"
- "The whole experience has been wonderful thank you for arranging this for us and please do share this nationally! I feel very motivated and positive after completing the BAME leadership course - equipped my mentoring skills, developed my 5 year/10 year career goal plan, had protected time to understand the impact of telling your story as part of reverse mentoring - really keen to use/apply the skills i have learnt - THANK YOU so much!"

Please comment on any aspect of your programme experience that you found most valuable

When thinking about what they valued most in this program, here were many references to the networking opportunities, and the opportunity to review their career plans, particularly with others from similar perspectives. The visualisation exercise that was included in the workshop was also singled out as valuable, and the women found the whole event to be inclusive and empowering.



- "I have found the time away from the workshop, has led me to ponder on the 'how to' and all the steps needed to make my career dream a reality!! I loved that this was women's only very empowering."
- "Break out rooms, speaking to others, hearing their story, not feeling that it is just me who faces barriers, feeling less like a failure."
- "everything!! in particular the opportunity to write statement and then reflect to make it concise. It was also good to write how your current experience could help you. This then helped with the milestones"
- "Hearing the inspiring ambitions, range of skills and experiences of other BAME women. Encouraging everyone to get some ideas and ambitions on paper and beginning the making of a plan."
- "The visualisation exercise was really powerful, the programme has totally reshaped how I'm thinking about my career and gave a safe space to discuss with other BAME women, despite how ambitious or 'out there' our aims were, which felt reassuring."

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 "working with likeminded individuals who are on the same journey as yourself. Working together on our future expectations and milestones identified a number of similarities and how we can support each other. I don't think this would have been achieved without the trainers, I have to say they were extremely amazing and came across very confident in their training style."

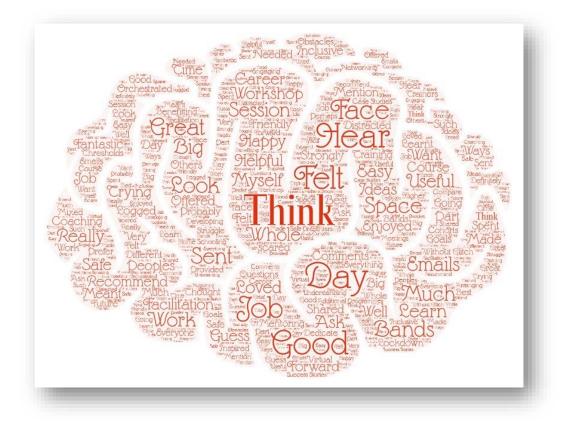
What further support do you need to achieve your goal?

There was a wide range of thoughts on what the participants thought they might need, that would help them achieve their goals. Ideas included; mentoring, further sessions like this, networking and catch-ups with this group, gaining more experience, resources such as forums, coaching, shadowing, protected time, and leadership opportunities.

- "1:1 support to identify the steps needed to achieve the goal, in a way that fits my lifestyle"
- "Developing ways to hold myself accountable to the goals I have set and regular catch ups with peer group from this programme"
- "Help with signposting i.e. knowing where to find information about mentors or shadowing etc. Sometimes it can feel like this information in hidden and it's these networks & relationships which can create opportunities."
- "If direction to relevant resources, forums, professional groups can be shared, this would be a helpful (for me and for others in my group) starting point in seeking and developing the networks which in turn can assist me with achieving my goal. Thank you."
- "Ongoing reminders to devote time to this purpose and keep me on track to reach goals as it gets put at the bottom of my list when everything is so busy!"
- "Regular protected time to monitor progress and provide leadership opportunities for BAME women to apply for and excel."
- "Visible senior role models, examples of people who have achieved their career aspirations and are BAME."

Please provide any additional comments about your experience with the programme

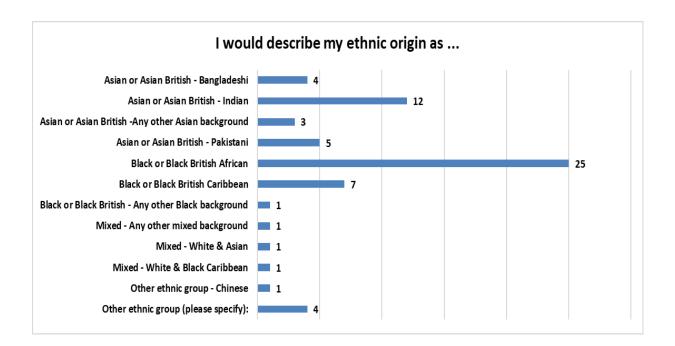
Comments provided in this section were all positive about the program experience. The attendees felt it was well facilitated, friendly, inclusive, and time well spent.



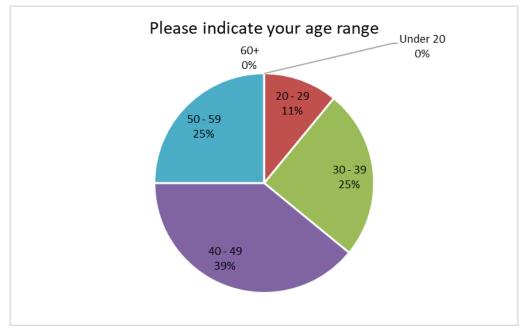
- "Fantastic, would strongly recommend! Thank you so much!"
- "I really enjoyed the session and look forward to benefitting from additional training programmes."
- "I really enjoyed the workshop it made me think about questions I hadn't thought of or were 'scared' to ask myself. Hearing other people's comments and ideas was so helpful - provided different ways of thinking. Also having a workshop for ethnic minority women was so useful because it felt like it was a safe space & shared understanding of some of the obstacles we face in developing our careers."
- "It was a day well spent where I was able to dedicate time to think about me and my career. It was good to also think I had inspired others. I learnt from hearing other people's goals too. Thank you"
- "Presenters did a good job in engaging myself who struggle with virtual meetings and prefer face to face."
- "Would have been good to have success stories and case studies from other cohorts to compare and learn from. Also think would be good to have mixed up the bandings as lower bands can perhaps learn from the higher bands"

5. Enrolment summary cohorts 4 to 7

Over 50% of participants self-recorded as Black, 37% as Asian and 5% of Mixed Ethnicity.

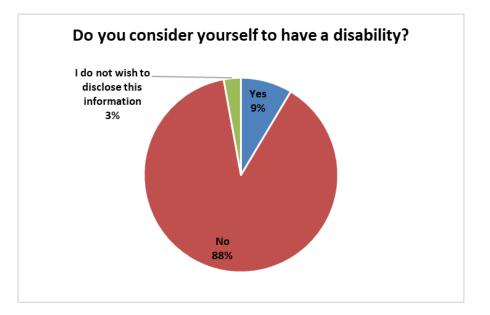


Participants were aged between 20 and 59, with the biggest group (39%) being in their 40s.

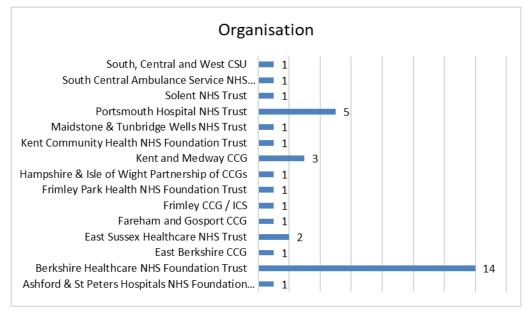


Some 88% of people recorded that they did not consider themselves to have a disability, and 3% chose not to disclose the information.

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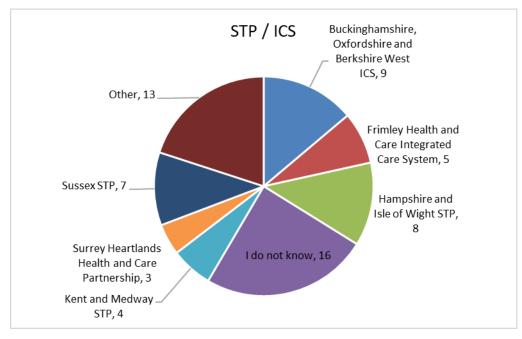


Below is a distribution of the participants by organisation. 22% of the participants work in the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. 52% of the attendees work in SE England NHS Trusts.

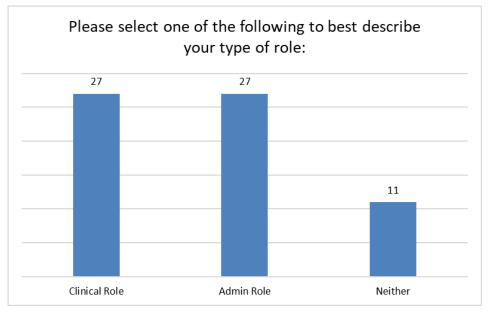


Sixteen of the respondents were unsure of their STP or ICS. Many of the remaining attendees came from BOB ICS and Hampshire & Isle of Wight STP. Those who said 'Other' clarified as follows:

- NHSE/I
- Regulatory body
- South East Region
- Performance & Improvement Directorate System Improvement Team South East Region
- Work with all ICS SE Based
- Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust



Twenty-seven of the participants are in clinical roles, 27 are in an admin role and 11 are neither.



Job titles were very diverse, but the ones that were represented multiple times included:

- Business support officer
- Project Manager
- Staff Nurse

Just below a third of the participants described themselves either as managers or as nursing staff.



The people who selected 'Other' identified their group as follows:

- Administrative/Clerical
- CCG Program Manager

- Commissioning
- Communications
- Employee
- LDEP Project Engagement Officer
- performance & Improvement
- Pharmacist
- Programme Lead
- psychologist
- SE region strategy and transformation
- Specialised Commissioning x 2

Around 45% of participants are already involved in other programmes to support their career development, and of the remaining attendees, 52% of those were on Reverse Mentoring programs. Other programs included:

- Beyond Boundaries
- Essential Management Skills
- Formal coaching
- Haemophilia courses
- HR Ambassador
- ILM L5 Coaching and Mentoring
- Mentoring and coaching program
- Mentoring program
- MSc Advanced Professional Practice
- PresQipp leadership training
- Ready Now program
- WRES Expert Advancement Group

We asked "Why are you applying to this programme?", to understand their motivation, and what their expectations about the programme might be.



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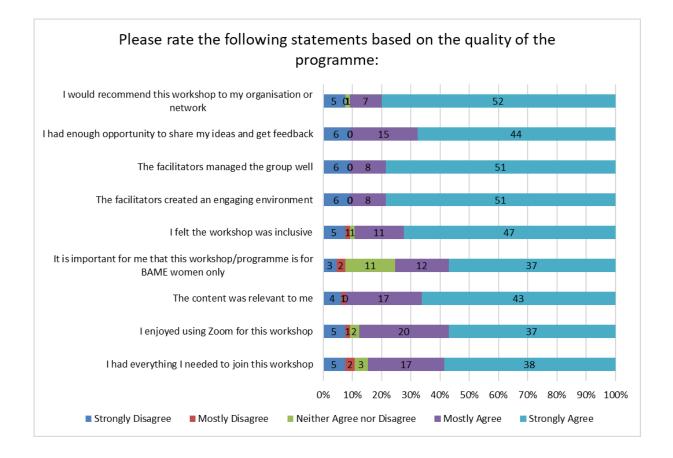
The focus of the group was largely on learning how to map their careers, and to gain development tools and techniques to support themselves. Many comments also held an element of improvement of confidence, and empowerment within their fields. A selection of some comments follows:

- To get clarity on my professional goals aligned with core values and progress quickly in my career pursuing what I love and in a field which plays on my strengths building a strong network along the way.
- To gain knowledge of other tools and techniques for career development
- I am unsure what my next career steps are and what route to go down within healthcare. I would like some support and time to plan tangible actions and how progression can be achieved.
- I'm applying to empower myself as an individual and also be able to empower other BAME future women leader. I believe being able to take part will give me the right tools to help achieve my ambitions and empower other women to move forward and have more BAME Women leaders
- This will open doors to a lot of opportunities in my career.
- I have a good idea about what I'd like to do, how to get there is what I'm struggling with.
- To gain further insights into Senior NHS leadership.
- Though I present as confident I still have some questions regarding my future and my place in my organization and team. As a Black nurse who will advocate for anyone I struggle with advocating for myself.
- I am applying because I have big dreams, but as a black woman living in this country I recognise that I need assistance to enable me realise these dreams. I believe the insights gained from this course will be instrumental in empowering me to push forward towards achievement of my goals.

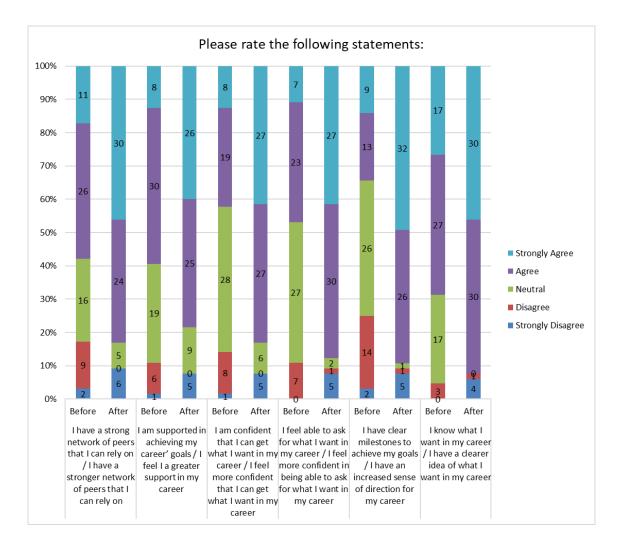
6. Evaluation Thresholds workshop cohorts 4 to 7

The workshop for the participants was run by Thresholds. Below is information collected through quantitative surveys.

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of questions about the workshop.



Before starting the programme, the participants were asked to consider their confidence in their career and its progression by grading statements on a 5-point scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The same statements were then revisited after the course, to see how the participants progressed.



The participants were asked what further support they might need to help them achieve their goals.





The biggest thing that the respondents would like is some form of further support - mostly 1:1 support in the form of coaching or mentoring. Most of those wanting mentorship also noted that it was available to them from this programme, and they were highly appreciative of that. Others wanted better support from their managers, perhaps in the form of better experience opportunities, signposting to opportunities or support with getting onto relevant training - perhaps with identifying that training. The next most common request was around staying within this network of peers, and the support and opportunities that it affords. Some comments included:

- Visible senior role models, examples of people who have achieved their career aspirations and are BAME.
- Regular protected time to monitor progress and provide leadership opportunities for BAME women to apply for and excel.
- Help with signposting i.e. knowing where to find information about mentors or shadowing etc. Sometimes it can feel like this information in hidden and it's these networks & relationships which can create opportunities.
- If direction to relevant resources, forums, professional groups can be shared, this would be a helpful (for me and for others in my group) starting point in seeking and developing the networks which in turn can assist me with achieving my goal. Thank you.
- Shadowing to gain more experience and the academic qualification to support
- Signposting to mentoring stretched assignments, how to shadow and how to get a mentor
- Support from my line managers to gain further experience in project management
- A review session in 1 year to consider progress and next steps for us all as a big group and facilitators, being able to share in the successes of others and hear about how challenges were navigated.
- More spaces where I can meet with other BAME women and people

Please comment on any aspect of the programme experience that you would like to see improved.



The most frequent comment here was that the workshop could be longer or split over 2 days - and that this second option would allow for some personal reflection between sessions, which might help them to engage and participate more fully. There were some comments about preparation, and suggestions have been fed back to the facilitators. Some considered how the participation was requested - a few people suggested that having facilitators ask individuals to speak was less ideal, and that more people might have contributed more if this was a more open option. They often felt there was little to improve and were positive around the things they did identify. There were 2 comments about a preference that the facilitators were all BAME. The comments included:

- Perhaps a bit more time to think about our responses would have been good, as it felt a bit rushed at the end, maybe it could be over spread across 2 days? However, the benefit was that we had to make a decision, which also has merit!
- I would have preferred more information about what to expect prior to the day. It was a very therapeutic experience, though I hadn't expected it to be so prior to the day.
- To delivered over a longer period of time (or potentially as two half days) to allow for reflection between the first and second parts of the course
- Possibly asking attendees to prepare a brief of their goals/ambitions in advance and spend more time during the sessions developing the detail
- The final session could have provided a bit more opportunity to share ideas across the 2 teams sharing ideas was one of the most valuable things about the workshop.

Involvement of field specific expert with same background who can guide or direct
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- I wonder if there is a space for personal narratives that can both facilitate or hinder our aspirations and leadership journey
- The program was excellent and provided me with tools I did not know I needed.
- Not my personal comment, but in my group, it was observed that they would have preferred full BAME facilitator
- I enjoyed working alongside other women of colour for this workshop however it would have felt safer and more powerful had all the facilitators been from BAME communities.

A comment from a different question seems more relevant here:

• I would just mention that we were all trying not to do our day job while on this workshop but we were sent emails to our work emails so that meant we all logged on and of course it's easy to get distracted and do some work.

Please comment on any aspect of your program experience that you found most valuable.



The overwhelming majority of comments reflected on both the peer support aspect of this group, and the visualisation exercise, which was found to be incredibly powerful, empowering and motivating. Goals and milestones discussions were also popular, and there was a sense of empowerment commented on regularly here. A lot of the respondents said that everything was valuable. A selection of comments follows:

• Break out rooms, speaking to others, hearing their story, not feeling that it is just me who faces barriers, feeling less like a failure.

- The visualisation exercise was really powerful, the program has totally reshaped how I'm thinking about my career and gave a safe space to discuss with other BAME women, despite how ambitious or 'out there' our aims were, which felt reassuring.
- The visualisation exercise was so useful I'd never done this before and it helped to 'clear' my mind and provide focus.
- being able to network with people who can help boost me and also critic my career plan
- The sharing for it gives me a lot of insights and the wisdom how to achieve my goals
- Writing down, in black and white, what relevant experience I already have.
- The re-framing of my achievements
- The feedback from others was great and it was good to hear about other people's experiences.
- The entire course was extremely valuable for me. For someone just starting out in their career, I believe this course is just right. I was able to communicate a lot in a safe environment, with absolutely no judgement. My peers were also amazing with supportive comments and guidance for my next step. I look forward to our monthly catch ups and remain hopeful that I will succeed.
- Connecting with link minded BAME women; having a day out of work to focus on me and my career the time to start planning this.
- time to think about and explore next steps in my career
- The fact that we as women of colour were able to empower each other.
- Very inspiring members who made me see things from a different perspective. Not to limit myself.

Please provide any additional comments about your experience with the programme.

There were many comments of thanks for this offering at this point, and gratitude for how the facilitators handled the event. A selection of the comments, which were all highly positive, follow:

• I really enjoyed the workshop - it made me think about questions I hadn't thought of or were 'scared' to ask myself. Hearing other people's comments and ideas was so

helpful - provided different ways of thinking. Also having a workshop for ethnic minority women was so useful because it felt like it was a safe space & shared understanding of some of the obstacles we face in developing our careers.

- Would have been good to have success stories and case studies from other cohorts to compare and learn from. Also think would be good to have mixed up the bandings as lower bands can perhaps learn from the higher bands
- Presenters did a good job in engaging myself who struggle with virtual meetings and prefer face to face.
- It was a day well spent where I was able to dedicate time to think about me and my career. It was good to also think I had inspired others. I learnt from hearing other people's goals too. Thank you
- I really enjoyed the course and had a lot of insights
- Every person struggling with their next step in their career should be offered this course.
- Everybody I met including the facilitators were all friendly, kind and supportive.
- This program was great thank you. :-) It would be great if SE Leadership Academy could start offering not just mentors and coaches but also collating a list of sponsors across the SE that would be fantastic!
- The materials used today were very helpful and interactive
- Very inspirational and insightful.

7. Evaluation Thresholds workshop: qualitative interviews cohorts 1 to 7

The Women's Leadership Development Programme from the South East EDI team is part of a suite of talent management interventions that addresses the interrelated aims of improving workforce retention, building a sustainable talent pipeline and improving access to leadership opportunities for historically underrepresented groups. Threshold was contracted to develop a day-long session with activities, discussion space and guidance for participants to write a career plan, explore their aspirations and begin the process of self-reflection. This document analyses participant feedback about the session provided by Threshold. There were 90 participants across different cohorts and after attending the day they were invited to discuss how they felt and their views on improving the programme for future cohorts. The feedback sessions were facilitated by Cavita Chapman, the Head of EDI for the South East NHS E/I and the lead for the talent management programmes. Participants of programme will be invited to attend a follow-up session in 6 months-time.

Over 30% of the NHS workforce have caring responsibilities, the majority are women, and this has historically affected their access to leadership and development opportunities. In addition Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women are affected by intersectional inequality (race and gender) and evidence from the NHS workforce data shows that BME women are least likely to have opportunities to access tools to become future leaders or to have fit-for-purpose support for their needs to enable them to build confidence and contribute in the workplace in line with their experience, skills and ambitions.

This Threshold offer supports the goal of providing the participants with the tools to develop and take charge of their career journey.

Discussion questions: How did you find the programme? Is there anything you would change? How have you benefited from the programme so far? Programme participants were all positive about the programme. The programme was seen as a catalyst for self-development, self-transformation and confidence building. Responses were clustered and categorised into broad categories.

Select comments from participants

"I saw the speakers as role models, and it inspired me to do more and want more for myself ..."

"I haven't really moved since Threshold with my career, but I feel equipped to focus on key areas to develop ..."

"The day was special with safe BME women space, allyship, meeting people with similar values ..."

"I am more attuned with what I want ..."

"I have recommended the Threshold day to others and would like to do more!"

"I built up confidence which is what I wanted from the day



Before	During the Threshold session	After Threshold session
Threshold day		
Useful	Excellent facilitator	Engaged with a mentor.
programme		
information.		
Close the time	Day was well organised	Would prefer to give feedback
between		using private email.
completing		
Threshold and		
getting a mentor.		
Need a pool of	Good to have a day to focus on	Providing feedback on the
BME coaches	career not interrupted by work.	session was immediate – would
and mentors.		be better to have time lag.
Most participants	Very good speakers – identified with	Became aware that there are
felt they would	their lived experience and spoke to	others similar to me, and that
benefit from two	participants needs.	there are women who have
days from		progressed and become
Threshold.		leaders.
	After breaking up into small groups it	Would be good to have a
	would be good to come back together	network of people who have
	in a group for discussion.	attended the programme on
		WhatsApp so there is continued
		learning and networking.
	Very interactive and kept me	Able to use the practical tools
	interested throughout.	that were introduced on the day.
		Found the career map useful.
	Liked the informal structure and feel	Would have liked support to
	of the Threshold session.	keep my momentum going.
	Put a structure to my career	Self-reflection seen as important
	aspirations – GANTT chart etc.	to onward development

Table 1 Feedback on programme



Enjoyed the guided meditation	Took up a secondment after the
element.	programme.
Felt my confidence improving during	Appreciated the need to spend
the session.	time on my own development.
Peer to peer support was valuable	The learning from the taken is
and empowering.	taken into onward coaching
	sessions.
Practical tools were eye opening.	I have changed roles.

Discussion: What are your career enablers and barriers?

This rich discussion illustrated that BME women in the workplace continue to face workplaces that are not free from discrimination based on gender and race. The resilience that participants spoke about in believing in themselves and their abilities also highlighted the need for more spaces/workshops where they can share their experiences and not feel isolated about what happens when they try to progress.

"Who gets spoken about when they are not around and who gets spoken about in the positive or negative ..."

"The architecture of the workplace is not supportive of BME women wanting to progress ..."

"There are no resources for networks to support those of us who cannot get support from managers ..."

"I feel that my aspirations are not recognised and what I want to do is considered unachievable."

"I face barriers to my aspirations but have emotional support from my manager"

"I don't have any enablers; it is just my own motivation"

"Career progression is time limited and I don't think others care about my future, so I push myself"

'I feel like I should be moving on and not stuck"



Career enablers	Career barriers
Internal motivation	Low confidence
Long term finance and retirement	Lack of cultural support for BME women
planning	progressing
Friends and family	No training on interview techniques
Faith	No transparency about secondments and other
	opportunities
Supportive line manager	Unsupportive teams/managers
Connecting with other BME people	Lack of diverse interview panels
Personal support from some team	Lack of role models
members	
Team culture of learning and	Interview feedback is poor
development	
BME staff network	No sponsor or broker
Build my own resilience	Disabling manager (e.g. not putting person
	forward for awards, recognising their work)

Table 2 Career enablers and barriers

Over 80% of participants in the feedback session said that their management do not care about their aspirations, including not allowing them to spend time to develop. All participants said they spend their own time trying to find out about what resources are available to them. In addition the need to push and promote yourself because of the lack of support from managers and members of the team meant that some of the participants felt disengaged, demotivated and discouraged about their own abilities and their sense of value, worth and belonging.

The more experienced participants and those who had spent longer working in the NHS were more likely to have developed their own coping and resilience building strategies to self-promote and find ways to get noticed. Some mentioned using a mix of strategies to find spaces where their skills would be noticed including adopting a more competitive approach to their job, using staff networks more, always looking out for others with similar experiences and also not bringing who they are to work –



the anticipation of being excluded for who you are was a painful for experience for many of the participants. Some participants had stopped discussing their aspirations with team members because they felt they had been sidelined once they spoke up about their hopes. They no longer shared their views with other members of the team because they did not feel they would be supported, and some felt they would be prevented from progressing if others knew about their career aspirations.

Almost all participants were aware of the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) indicators and used it to assess their operating environment. They were aware of the progress or lack of that the data showed for their individual organisations and based some of their strategies and decisions on this. They also felt a conviction that the lack of visible BME women role models in the workplace was hampering the ability of the wider workforce to consider them as potential future leaders and that it was difficult to challenge these biases and stereotypes on their own. This view is found in research into BME women in the workplace across different Western industrialised countries including the UK (see for example, Catalyst, 2005 Women "take care," men "take charge": Stereotyping of U.S. business leaders exposed).

The Threshold session stimulated considerable thinking and increased awareness that experiences were shared. This proved an important step for those working in teams which have less diversity where they, as BME women, are not reflected in team activities and social breaks. The Threshold session was viewed as an exceptional opportunity because so few had been given a chance to spend time thinking about their own needs in a space where they could let down some of the barriers that they use working in the NHS just to get through the day and deal with negative perceptions of their worth.

The core areas that the Threshold session provided was a safe space to:

- Expose vulnerabilities
- Gain valuable opportunity for reflection
- Get ready to face tough challenges



- Focus more intently in a structured way
- Better recognise strengths.

The session fulfilled most of the elements of group coaching sessions where there is a chance to compare experiences with like-minded others in a supportive environment. The opportunity to feedback also plays an important part.

It was quite clear that participants wanted more opportunities such as this one and that they were willing to provide additional feedback to support further interventions so that other BME women could benefit too. While the session was more about personal development than an overhaul of gendered workplace structures, many of those on the session have already gone on to apply for more senior roles and opportunities, with some having attained them. Therefore, it suggests that programmes such as this one does have scope for wider organisational reform.

The findings of this evaluation are supported by wider studies into BME women experiences in the workplace. For example, BME women are often said to have to work harder to get the visibility and recognition to advance. They are also the least likely group to find ad hoc sponsors to support them which also impairs their ability to plan for their financial future, make arrangements to support their wider families and have a workplace compensation structure that reflects their abilities (see 'Black women in the UK workplace survey 2022 by BWIL' for more information).

8. Recommendations

Based on analysis of data from cohorts one to seven the following are recommendations for programme improvements:

 HR/OD should use both internal and external coaches that are suitably trained in intersectional experiences of BME women. The coaches can be deployed for individual and group coaching sessions.



- NHS to launch programme to increase the number of BME mentors and coaches for women.
- Improve targeted communications to BME Staff Networks about development opportunities.
- Develop line manager intervention to address exclusion of BME women. This
 is crucial in ensuring that input from line managers is positive and consistent
 across the organisation.
- Introduce intervention about 'belonging' to support BME women to protect their resilience and build nurturing networks that care about their needs and aspirations. This should be supported by executive endorsement and formal acknowledgement that progression of BME women in the NHS is important.
- Introduce suite of interventions specifically for BME women in leadership with ring-fenced funding for professional groups where there is an underrepresentation of BME women which impacts patient care – for example maternity and midwifery. This is a pressing issue with government policy makers calling for improved recruitment and retention of a representative workforce to deliver NHS services over the next 10 to 15 years.

9. Conclusion

The contribution that the participants themselves made to the programme in providing feedback and engaging with each other is invaluable for future development of research and courses in the area. The BAME women on the programme were clearly waiting for such an opportunity to meet others and be shown that they too are valued in the workplace and that there is support being considered for their aspirations and recognition that they too want and can progress in the NHS. It is difficult to put across the scale of this issue and the impact that it has on marginalised groups in the workplace. Women are still the least likely to be promoted in most workplaces to senior leadership positions and when ethnicity is factored in, BAME women face a multiplication of oppressions based on historical biases, stereotypes and workforce distribution. To become the employer of choice, it is recommended that further investment is available to (a) deliver these courses and



(b) develop a awareness module for line managers about the situation faced by BAME women in the workplace. This will be especially relevant to deliver on the NHS Long Term Plan to raise representation by ethnicity in key professional groups where BAME people in general, and BAME women specifically are underrepresented.

It is also recommended that the information captured by evaluation in the form of story-telling and experiences shared be developed into an awareness session for HR/OD, recruiters and Comms to help them shape and tailor their services and messaging for this long ignored group of our workforce.

This evaluation report supports wider industry research on a gap in fit-for-purpose programmes that target the career and aspirational needs of BAME women in the workplace.

The feedback shows that despite well documented and reported barriers to career advancement, BAME women persist, and develop their own coping strategies to navigate systems of discrimination that they routinely face. The progress of even a few provides much needed evidence and role models to counteract the historical narrative that BAME women are not as effective in leadership positions as the cohort that is more commonly able to be promoted to leadership roles. Many participants reflected on the fact there is a paucity of role models in the workplace which makes it harder for them to convince their line managers, team members and wider organisation that they can be effective leaders that deliver results and improve services in the NHS.

The hurdles faced by BAME women can take a toll and one of the recommendations is to provide more safe spaces that are well published and promoted so this cohort can build strength together and support one another, thus reducing one of the common themes of isolation, reduction of confidence and needing to spend time building self-esteem up repeatedly because of microaggressive behaviour in the workplace.

It is recommended that further iterations of this programme is delivered along with a plan for structural support in organisations that BAME women can access after they



have finished different elements of the programme (e.g. completion of workshop, wider leadership offers, mentoring opportunities). This could look like a dedicated career webpage listing cross organisational opportunities in professional groups where BAME women are severely underrepresented.