

INVITATION TO TENDER

**Review of anti-racism in NHS Leadership
Training**

Date: 27 May 2026

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About the NHS Race and Health Observatory

The NHS Race and Health Observatory (RHO) is an independent organisation, supported by the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England, set up to explore ethnic inequalities in access to healthcare, experiences of healthcare, health outcomes, and inequalities experienced by Black and other ethnic minority members of the healthcare workforce. This includes assessing the aspirations to tackle ethnic health inequalities outlined in national healthcare policy. The RHO is a proactive investigator, providing strong recommendations that inform policymaking and facilitate change. The RHO is evidence-driven and solutions-focused.

The RHO is hosted by NHS Alliance. Its board and team are independent, and it dictates its own direction and areas of focus. The RHO has three main functions:

- Facilitating new, high-quality, and innovative research and evidence
- Making strategic policy recommendations for change
- Supporting the practical implementation of those recommendations and of anti-racism focused interventions more widely, within the NHS.

Scope of the work

Background

Persistent racial and ethnic inequalities in NHS workforce experiences, progression, and senior leadership representation are well documented. Over recent decades, a range of leadership development programmes aimed at Black and minoritised ethnic staff have been implemented across the NHS, including programmes such as Stepping Up and Ready Now. While these initiatives have supported individual participants, evidence suggests their wider impact has often been limited by an underlying deficit model, which places responsibility for change on individuals rather than addressing structural and systemic barriers such as racism, unequal access to opportunity, discriminatory practices, and organisational culture.

More recently, there has been growing interest in anti-racism approaches to leadership development, which explicitly seek to identify, challenge, and dismantle systems of oppression within organisations, rather than “fixing” individuals. Leadership is defined as accountability for equitable outcomes across all people and organisational contexts. Programmes that do not demonstrably improve equity in experience and outcomes cannot be considered effective leadership development.

There is limited robust evidence on whether current NHS leadership programmes meaningfully embed anti-racism principles; how effective they are in shifting power and culture; and how they compare with earlier initiatives focused on Black and ethnically minoritised staff.

This research will contribute to a stronger evidence base to inform future NHS leadership development policy, commissioning, and practice.

Project outline

The purpose of this research project is to critically examine the extent to which NHS leadership programmes, and other programmes that cater to NHS leaders, adopt an anti-racism approach, and to assess the effectiveness of these approaches in addressing structural ethnic inequalities in leadership development, progression, and experience.

To enable a focused and in-depth analysis, the project should concentrate on six nationally recognised leadership development programmes that play a key role in shaping leadership pipelines at Band 7 and above. These programmes are the Edward Jenner Programme, Rosalind Franklin Programme, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Programme, and Nye Bevan Programme (NHS Leadership Academy), alongside the Top Manager Programme and Clinical Directors and Lead Clinicians Leadership Programme (The King's Fund).

The research will explore:

1. Whether programmes focus on or include transforming systems of oppression rather than reinforcing deficit narratives about Black and ethnically minoritised staff.
2. How participants and providers understand, operationalise, and experience “anti-racism” in leadership development.
3. What impact these programmes have had compared to earlier “BME” specific leadership initiatives.
4. To evaluate the anti-racism intent, design, and outcomes of NHS leadership programmes
5. Establish what a good anti-racism module/training looks like by evaluating existing antiracism programmes provided by the NHS.
6. To generate evidence-based recommendations for future leadership development that promotes equity, accountability and systemic change

Methodology

While we expect the proposed methodologies to be informed by the expertise and experience of bidding organisations, we would like bids to include consideration of the following methods and research phases.

1. Literature Review
 - Review national and international literature on:
 - anti-racism leadership and organisational change
 - racism, discrimination, and power in leadership development
 - critiques of “BME leadership” models
 - Include evidence from healthcare and comparable sectors
 - Identify key gaps in the current NHS evidence base

2. Review of Existing Leadership Programmes

- A critical review of current and recent leadership development provision, including but not limited to:
 - NHS Leadership Academy programmes
 - Relevant work by the King's Fund

The review should assess:

- stated aims and theories of change
- how racism, discrimination, and power are conceptualised
- whether programmes address systems or individuals
- evaluation methods and reported outcomes

3. Defining “What Good Looks Like”

- Develop a clear, evidence informed definition of good anti-racism leadership development
- Explicitly distinguish between:
 - inclusive leadership
 - race-aware approaches
 - anti-racism models
- Align findings with the 7 RHO principles of anti-racism

4. Qualitative Research: Participants and Providers

- Conduct qualitative research with:
 - leadership programme participants
 - programme designers and providers
- Explore lived experience of:
 - racism and discrimination within leadership pathways
 - benefits and limitations of current programmes
 - perceived organisational versus individual change
- Research must adopt an anti-racism, trauma-informed approach

5. Pre- and Post Programme Knowledge and Understanding

- Assess how participants’ understanding of:
 - racism
 - systems of oppression
 - leadership responsibility for equity changes before and after programme participation
- Focus on learning related to structural change, not confidence alone

6. Comparative Learning from Other Industries

- Review evidence from other sectors (e.g. higher education, social care, local government, corporate, ethnic minority organisations)
- Identify transferable anti-racism leadership models and practices relevant to the NHS

7. Recommendations and Future Direction

Produce clear, actionable recommendations addressing:

- what good anti-racism leadership programmes should include
- which models are most effective and why
- what should no longer be commissioned

- how leadership development should be embedded within wider system accountability

Outputs

At the end of the research period, the successful organisation should produce a report including:

- A full research / recommendations report structured around the chapters above
- A standalone literature review
- Practical recommendations for designing, commissioning, and delivering NHS leadership development programmes that explicitly address structural racism and promote equitable outcomes for staff and populations served.
- A clear framework defining effective anti-racism leadership development
- An outline curriculum for potential future delivery of leadership training
- Executive summary and slide deck for senior stakeholders

The successful applicant/s will be required to work collaboratively and specifically commit to regular meetings with NHS RHO and with the project Task and Finish Group, as needed. The Task and Finish Group includes members of our [Stakeholder Engagement Advisory Group](#), and independent experts, and they will meet roughly every 2 months.

The successful applicant/s will be expected to be guided by the NHS RHO Implementation Model throughout the project (Appendix A)

NHS RHO recognises the power of collaboration and the potential for multiple experts, initiatives, and organisations to pool their expertise and resources to achieve a greater impact. If you believe you can fulfil some aspects of the project but not all, we encourage you to consider a collaborative approach.

Detailed specifications

- The initial research period will be 9 months from the date of award.
- The review should include both academic and grey literature (e.g. government, publications NHS reports, think tank publications, as well as community-produced and experience-based evidence if appropriately validated).
- The research should include extensive and meaningful community engagement at all stages, including initial scoping and assurance of final conclusions and recommendations.
- Quality criteria should be applied to evidence including, where appropriate, evidence of user-validation and stakeholder validity.
- The final report should take the form of a word document and will be primarily branded in the NHS Race and Health Observatory's house style (with co-branding considered where appropriate).
- We welcome bids up to £150,000. Higher value bids may be considered if adequate justification can be given for the additional amount.
- The report will be for external publication.

Tender submission

Your tender submission should be organised under the following headings:

‘Project plan’ to include:

- An introduction illustrating your understanding of the brief, the role that race and racism play in workforce development in leaders and how it may inform your approach to certain aspects of the project.
- A summary project plan including details of your proposed methodology and approach to community engagement.
- A timeline including key dates to demonstrate how you would meet the proposed deadline.
- An indication of how much input and capacity would be required from the Observatory team, including review points to check in on progress with research and to understand emerging findings.
- Details of key personnel who will be involved in the project.
- Key risks and mitigating actions for the project

‘Fee proposal’ to include:

- Costings for the work including VAT.
- A detailed budget covering both personnel costs and any non-pay expenses.
- The costs of any elements of the work that would be provided by another company/freelance staff.

‘Company information’ to include:

- A brief outline your values, structure, size, and capabilities in general.
- Detail of any elements of the work that would be provided by another company/freelance staff.
- An explanation of the unique benefit you will bring to this work.
- An explanation of how you will approach safeguarding, especially in engaging with people affected by dementia.
- Details of how you propose to ensure GDPR compliance, as appropriate.

‘Supporting Evidence’ to include:

- Examples of at least two similar tenders you have won and delivered.
- The details of two previous clients (preferably not for profit) that we can contact for reference purposes (references will be taken up for firms shortlisted).
- Two examples of written work completed by the primary proposed authors.
- A completed equalities questionnaire (see schedule 1).

Data Protection & Information Security

- Details on how you will align with UK GDPR & Data Protection requirements
- Details on how you will keep data secure, including details on how participant interview data, recordings and transcripts will be stored, anonymised and managed throughout and after the project
- Details on any accreditations you hold such as Cyber Essentials plus, ISO27001 or similar.

Selection criteria

We will rank tenders on the basis of:

1. Overall fit to requirements of the brief and proposed methods.
2. A proven track record of impactful high quality previous work in the area.
3. Relevant experience of team, including a demonstration of cultural competence, understanding of dementia care, and an ability to engage with issues around ethnic health inequality and racism.
4. Value for money to the Observatory.
5. Your approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Key Dates

ITT released	27 th May 2026
Deadline for bids	19 th June 2026
Potential follow-up interviews	WC 29th June 2026
Contract awarded	July 2026
Draft full report	February 2026
Final report	March 2027

Instructions for the return of the tenders

Tenders should be submitted by email to info@nhsrho.org

Tender ref: RHO_ Leadership Development 2026

Tenders must be received by 23:59 on 19th June 2026. Tenders received after this date will not be considered.

It is incumbent on tenders to ensure they have all the information required for the preparation of their tenders.

Further information about this tender can be obtained from:

Name	Owen Chinembiri Arnie Puntis
Title	Assistant Director-Workforce Senior Research and Policy Manager
Email address	Info@nhsrho.org

Schedule 1- Equalities questionnaire

This questionnaire must be completed satisfactorily in order for any company to be considered to tender for this NHS Confederation contract. In most cases, references to legislation below refer to the Equality Act 2010.

1. Is it your policy as an employer and as a service provider to comply with your statutory obligations under the equality legislation, which applies to Great Britain, or equivalent legislation in the countries in which your firm employs staff?

Yes No

2. Accordingly, is it your practice not to discriminate directly or indirectly in breach of equality legislation which applies in Great Britain and legislation in the countries in which your firm employs staff:

- In relation to decisions to recruit, select, remunerate, train, transfer and promote employees?

Yes No

- In relation to delivering services?

Yes No

3. Do you have a written equality policy?

Yes No

4. Does your equality policy cover:

- Recruitment, selection, training, promotion, discipline and dismissal?

Yes No

- Victimisation, discrimination and harassment making it clear that these are disciplinary offences?

Yes No

- Identify the senior position for responsibility for the policy and its effective implementation?

Yes No

5. Is your policy on equality set out:

- In documents available and communicated to employees, managers, recognised trade unions or other representative groups?

Yes No

- In recruitment advertisements or other literature?

Yes No

- In materials promoting your services?

Yes No

Please evidence all questions.

If you answered NO to any part of questions 4 or 5 can you provide (and if so, please do) other evidence to show how you promote equalities in employment and service delivery.

6. In the last three years, have any findings of unlawful discrimination been made against your firm by the Employment Tribunal, the Employment Appeal Tribunal or any other court or in comparable proceedings in any other jurisdiction?

Yes No

7. In the last three years, has any contract with your organisation been terminated on grounds of your failure to comply with:

- Legislation prohibiting discrimination; or

Yes No

- Contract conditions relating to equality in the provision of services

Yes No

8. In the last three years, has your firm been the subject of formal investigations by the Equality and Human Rights Commission or a comparable body, on grounds of alleged unlawful discrimination?

Yes No

9. If the answer to question 6 and 7 is YES, or, in relation to question 8, a finding adverse to your organisation has been made, what steps have you taken as a result of that finding? Please summarise the details below and provide full details as an attachment.

10. If you are not currently subject to UK employment law, please supply details of your experience in complying with equivalent legislation that is designed to eliminate discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity. List any attached documents.

Guidance in answering the equality questionnaire

When completing the questionnaire, all companies must answer each question fully and supply any documentary evidence requested. Failure to fully answer each question or failure to submit any documentary evidence required may lead the NHS Confederation to consider the answer unsatisfactory.

Question 1 and 2

If your firm has implemented an effective equality policy, you will be able to answer yes to these questions. You will be able to confirm your answers by submitting your equality policy and supporting evidence as for as part of this section.

Question 3 and 4

You will need to submit a copy of your firm's equality policy. You will need to ensure that your policy covers:

- Recruitment, selection, training, promotion, discipline and dismissal
- Victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- Identifies the senior position responsibly for the policy

Question 5

Documents available and method of communication to staff. You will be required to submit examples of any documents, which explain your firm's policies in respect of recruitment, selection, remuneration, training and promotion outside of the equality policy asked for in Question 3 and 4.

You will also need evidence of how your firm has communicated this document to staff i.e. notice boards or issue individual employees with a copy. There is no prescribed evidence here. You will need to submit whatever documents your firm uses for these purposes.

In recruitment advertisements or other literature, you will need to submit evidence that makes public your firm's commitment to equality in employment and service delivery.

Small firms may not have detailed procedures, but you must ensure that evidence is provided which demonstrates that personnel operate in accordance with a written equality policy that includes:

- Open recruitment practices such as using job centres and local newspapers to advertise vacancies
- Instructions about how the firm ensures that all job applicants are treated fairly.

In material promoting your services This relates to how your firm provides information in materials promoting your services e.g. in different languages, making information accessible to people with hearing and visual impairment and physical access for disabled users.

Question 6

This question's concern is whether any court or industrial tribunal has found your firm guilty of unlawful discrimination in the last three years. It is important to be honest with your answers. The NHS Confederation may check your responses. If the answer is yes, you may wish to insert additional information which details the actions your firm has undertaken to prevent a repeat occurrence.

Answering yes will not automatically mean that you do not get the contract; you need to ensure that the NHS Confederation feels confident that you have sufficient measures put in place to prevent a re-occurrence.

Question 7

This question's concern is whether your firm has ever had a contract terminated for noncompliance with equality legislation or equality contract conditions. If the answer is yes, your firm may wish to submit additional information which details the actions they have taken to prevent a repeat occurrence.

Question 8

This question asks whether your firm has had any investigation carried out, whatever the outcome. The NHS Confederation can check a contractor's answer from lists that the CRE and EOC produce, so please be honest. The NHS Confederation is aware that because a firm has been investigated does not mean that it is guilty of discrimination. The result of the investigation will be taken into account when assessing your firm's answers to the questionnaire.

Question 9

If your firm has been found guilty of unlawful discrimination, you will need to provide evidence that details the steps your firm has taken to correct the situation. The Court, Industrial Tribunal or CRE will have made recommendations about steps your firm should take to eliminate the discrimination. If no action or inadequate action has been taken in this respect, only then will your firm be considered refusal onto the tender list.

Question 10

If your firm is not subject to UK employment law, you must ensure that you supply details of equivalent legislation that you adhere to.