GREATER MANCHESTER HOUSING PROVIDERS (GMHP)

Championing Change for Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic (BAME) Leadership

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Summary of the Pilot Programme and Research Findings

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1. Executive Summary

Manchester Metropolitan University worked in partnership with 13 housing providers across Greater Manchester Housing Providers (GMHP) to design, deliver and research a pilot programme: *Championing Change for Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic (BAME) Leadership*

Many well-intentioned diversity programmes are built on a *deficit view* which assumes that institutions themselves are blameless and that marginalised groups bear individual responsibility for failing to progress to senior roles (Bhopal, 2018). Our pilot programme was different. This programme was not about 'fixing' BAME staff to fit into a career pathway that turns out to be well designed for White staff. BAME employees navigating careers do not require investment because they are inherently deficient but because they face a context that is less favourable to them than their White counterparts. The priority, then, is to change organisations to make leadership pathways fair and provide mentoring that gives BAME staff voice and opportunities from which they were previously excluded.

Our pilot programme used reciprocal mentoring as a route to investigate obstacles to BAME progression and collectives of Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions to facilitate organisational change. The programme was a means of challenging and supporting GMHP to develop more empowering and inclusive leadership environments and career pathways. Our programme provided BAME Mentees with career mentoring that they may have unfairly missed out on but its core aim was to go further: utilising the open exchange between Mentor and Mentee to identify barriers to BAME progression, sharing this with a Change Champion and the programme community and communicating to colleagues and senior leaders to push for change. A core outcome has been a collective of staff from across the partnership, including at senior levels, who can help GMHP to talk about race and tackle racial inequality.

A survey reported by *McCabe* (2018) in *Inside Housing* in January 2018 revealed a housing sector overwhelmingly led by White people. Of the 64 housing associations who responded to the survey, there were **only 3 BAME chief executives and 15 BAME executives** (including the 3 chief executives) out of 330 executives – the equivalent of 4.5%. The research further highlighted that **nearly three-quarters of housing associations had an executive team that was completely White, and two were led entirely by White male executives**. Crucially, findings also revealed that little had changed in the previous two years when they first started to investigate diversity in senior positions in the housing sector.

We know that there are many (White) senior leaders in organisations (including GMHP) who are motivated to do more to address the under-representation of BAME employees in leadership roles. They perhaps do not know where to start, not least because talking about race and ethnicity is often awkward and uncomfortable or can even feel risky. This programme embraced open discussion about race and ethnicity through an opening workshop that established trust and ground rules, in reciprocal mentoring relationships and by empowering established leaders as Change Champions to form a triangle with a mentoring pair and to work with them to become change agents.

The programme sought to create safe spaces to explore the disadvantage that BAME employees face and to raise the consciousness of White people, so they recognise BAME

experiences and the privilege that 'Whiteness' bestows in a racialised world. Crucially, the intention was to facilitate the commitment, awareness, careful reflection and confidence of (White) leaders, so they grew to become change agents, galvanised to utilise their power to do the work of making meaningful organisational change and creating fairer leadership pathways for all.

The programme created 13 reciprocal mentoring partnerships. These aimed to employ close sharing between up-and-coming BAME staff and senior leaders (who were mostly White) to identify wider organisational problems. It sought to empower Mentors and Mentees as agents of change. Mentees and Mentors worked together for 14-months (including a programme pause of two months due to COVID-19) and were encouraged to meet for an hour once a month. The Mentor provided advocacy and guidance to support the Mentee's career development, a vital resource for BAME staff whom – evidence tells us – often miss out on more *informal* career mentoring.

Crucially, this programme also involved 13 *Change Champions*. Change Champions were senior leaders nominated by each of the housing providers to represent their organisation and be the voice to support other voices and advocate for organisational change. They were open to learning from the mentoring process and facilitated ongoing conversations at senior levels so that leadership pathways become fairer for everybody. Mentees and Mentors were supported by a number of development opportunities including launch and closing events, training and peer and action learning sets.

This pilot programme was subject to research to assess its effectiveness, learn how it creates change and to provide recommendations for the future.

> **The programme used reciprocal mentoring and change agents to:**
>
> - support the career progression of BAME Mentees.
> - employ the trusted space in reciprocal mentoring relationships to unearth organisational barriers to BAME progression.
> - activate a collective of Change Champions, Mentors and Mentees across GMHP to communicate barriers, advocate for change and use privileged access to senior leaders to design and facilitate organisational change processes.

The programme revealed obstacles to BAME progression including:

- An absence of BAME role models, serving to signal that diversity is undervalued and that progression for BAME employees is problematic;
- Experiencing or witnessing poor line management that was occasionally overtly racist and, more often, discriminatory by discounting a BAME colleague due to poor understanding, or appreciation, of their different heritage and way of being;
- Recruitment and selection practices that seek 'like me' candidates for leadership roles and therefore overlook the particular strengths of BAME applicants;
- Leadership practice founded in White culture which means that BAME colleagues have to leave any ethnic culture 'at the door' in order to progress. This can prevent them from flourishing at work and means organisations miss out on the wider awareness of diverse customers and staff that BAME leaders can bring to decision making.

Encouragingly, some of these issues are already being addressed and acted on by *Change Champions* as a Collective across GMHP or within specific housing providers. Being part of the pilot programme gave leaders new insight into the blockages BAME staff face and the inequalities they need to address to ensure that BAME employees enjoy a working environment that enables them to reach their full potential.

We also encouraged Change Champions to collate and monitor robust data on BAME representation. Sharing the reality that BAME staff are under-represented at senior levels is crucial to broadening and sustaining change because data is a key medium through which GMHP can communicate to the whole organisation that change to generate routes for BAME leadership is an organisational problem – and a priority challenge.

The programme successfully created some important building blocks for change to support fairer leadership pathways for staff of BAME heritage. Individual providers reported implementing initiatives to influence change including investing in *Inclusive Employers* (a leading membership organisation for employers looking to build inclusive workplaces); introducing BAME staff working and networking groups; introducing and/or reviewing diversity and inclusion policies and; expressing a commitment to reviewing recruitment practices.

A collective of Change Champions have committed to continuing their work across GMHP to generate better routes for BAME leadership. This includes Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting (EPGR) to identify existing ethnicity pay gaps and inform the development of practical steps to close them. Many Mentees are also working together as a collective.

The Pilot Programme Involved:

- 13 reciprocal mentoring relationships created across participating housing providers. Mentees and Mentors reflected together on the obstacles and opportunities that enable BAME employees to fulfil their potential at work.
- 13 *Change Champions* - senior leaders nominated by each of the housing providers involved in the pilot programme to represent their organisation and be the voice to support other voices to advocate for organisational change.
- Active development of collective action by building a collective of Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions and advocating good communication between these groups.
- A *Breaking The Silence Enquiry Tool*, a short, engaging document that summarises some of the factors that research has found to cause the under-representation of BAME staff in leadership roles and poses 'enquiring questions' to help the reader reflect on what is going on in their own context and plan change.
- Encouraging (White) senior leaders to reflect on the privileges that accompany Whiteness and to listen hard to BAME staff and campaign for change. The programme clearly advocated that, in talking about race, we must talk about and own Whiteness and invite White leaders to become White allies committed to pursuing BAME equality.
- A one-day programme launch event for all programme participants including training and development opportunities and a role model panel.
- Data collation on BAME under-representation within participating organisations to a specified template with the aim of exposing BAME under-representation as an organisational rather than individual problem and tracking BAME representation in leadership pathways moving forwards.
- Facilitated peer and action learning sets with Mentees and Mentors to provide Mentees and Mentors with a forum to learn from each other, exchange stories and engage in shared learning.
- A one-day training session with Change Champions exploring their role; connecting with and building on relationships with Mentees and Mentors; addressing the importance of engaging with senior leaders and supporting Change Champions to self-organise into a change collective.
- Closing event for all programme participants focusing on: celebrating programme successes and shared learning experiences; addressing next steps for GMHP and; embedding longer term organisational change to generate better routes for BAME leadership.
- Ongoing research to assess programme effectiveness, learn how it creates change and to provide recommendations for the future.

Main Research Findings:

- The programme revealed worrying obstacles to BAME progression including a lack of role models and signals of valuing diversity, line management that was occasionally racist or more frequently discounted BAME heritage, seeking 'like me' candidates and a White leadership culture.
- Most Mentees and Mentors reported career development value from the reciprocal mentoring relationships. Two Mentees have been promoted and are now further along in their leadership careers as a direct result of experiencing this pilot programme.
- Many Mentees bravely shared their experiences of unfairness or discrimination within their mentoring partnerships. In doing so, most Mentors reported being made more aware of the additional challenges their BAME Mentees have faced in developing their careers.
- Obstacles to BAME progression were unearthed through the reciprocal mentoring process. Having time and space to do this in a safe context was valued by programme participants. Encouragingly, some of these issues are already being addressed and acted on by Change Champions as a collective, across GMHP or within specific housing providers.
- The programme empowered some Mentees to either take-up or consider mentoring others in the future and a number of Mentors signalled their intention to mentor other BAME employees.
- Change Champions formed a collective galvanized to generate wider organisational change.
- Change Champions have committed to Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting (EPGR) to focus attention and drive action. They will support Mentees to set the agenda for Change Champions to work on moving forwards.
- There was recognition that White leaders benefit from support to reflect on the privileges that accompany Whiteness and how power and privilege play out. Also, that senior (White) leaders should be supported to understand the legitimacy of their role in creating change.
- Programme participants (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions) felt strongly that next steps for GMHP involve accessing senior leaders including Chief Executives and ensuring that this and future work is firmly on their agenda. Change Champions have started this work. It is vital they have an empowering, ongoing and responsive relationship with individual Mentees and the collective of Mentees.

Main Recommendations:

Issues for GMHP to address:

1. Engage with the GMHP Chief Executive Group and encourage senior leaders to continue to energise the programme and be accountable for making change happen. Ideally, this should involve supporting a new cohort of participants and sponsoring projects started by participants to tackle various causes of BAME inequality.
2. Support senior leaders to understand the legitimacy of their role in creating change.
3. Broaden training that helps White staff reflect on White privilege and the role of White leaders as advocates. Share stories and data that speak of barriers to leadership that press home the point that this is an organisational problem for which there is collective responsibility for change.
4. Continue to collect and publish data on BAME progression; monitor this at Board level on an annual basis.
5. Revise the pilot programme in light of suggested improvements to programme elements and encourage further participation across GMHP.
6. Continue to innovate with Manchester Metropolitan University to further develop strands of activity identified through the programme e.g., scaling the programme, reviewing recruitment practices and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting. This could be through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership Model (KTP) which would create a conduit between GMHP and Man Met to work to develop and sustain lasting change.
7. Share your learning from this pilot programme in Greater Manchester and in the housing sector to help develop place and sector-based movements to generate routes for BAME leadership.

Issues for Mentees/Mentors/Change Champions to address:

8. Continue to support Mentees to progress as BAME leaders within GMHP through reciprocal mentoring relationships.
9. Further support Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions to work together as collectives to lead organisational change to generate routes for BAME leadership in GMHP.
10. Maximise opportunities for Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion to reflect and act together to influence change (alongside other senior leaders within respective housing providers).
11. Continue to support Mentees and build on an agenda for change informed by them.

2. Why was the *Championing Change for Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic (BAME) Leadership* Pilot Programme Required?

2.1 BAME disadvantage in society and workplaces: Following the tragic death of George Floyd in May 2020, The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has re-focused our attention on the insidious impact of racial discrimination and the stark realities of racism in society and workplaces. Bhopal (2020) draws our attention to the fact that Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic (BAME) groups in the UK are more likely than White groups to be unemployed, live in poverty and suffer from mental health problems (Cabinet Office, 2017; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed and deepened existing racial inequalities.

Back in 2017, Baroness McGregor-Smith's seminal review of Race in the Workplace clearly outlined the unfair under-representation of BAME employees in UK workplaces and highlighted that: '*there a is structural, historical bias that favours certain individuals. This does not just stand in the way of ethnic minorities, but women, those with disabilities and others.*' This is not only unjust but unproductive: the potential benefit to the UK economy from full participation and progression of BAME employees is estimated to be £24 billion a year.

Put bluntly, BAME workers are not experiencing the same progression opportunities as their White counterparts. A report from Business in the Community (2015) stated that one in eight of the working age population are from a BAME background, yet only one in ten are in the workplace and only one in 16 top management positions are held by a person of ethnic minority. Furthermore, Trade Union Congress research (TUC, 2020) reports that one in eight BAME women are under-employed compared to one in thirteen White men and concludes that BAME women face intersecting systems of oppression across their multiple identities including class, nationality, migration status, and faith.

Evidence attests that these inequalities have nothing to do with ambition, talent or motivation (Atewologun and Singh, 2010; Tariq and Syed, 2017). Research by the Chartered Institute for Personal Development (CIPD, 2017) revealed that BAME employees are more likely than White British employees to say that their career progression to date has failed to meet their expectations. This pattern is also reflected in the housing sector.

2.2 BAME leadership in the housing sector: A survey reported by McCabe (2018) in *Inside Housing* in January 2018 revealed a housing sector overwhelmingly led by White people. Of the 64 housing associations who responded to the survey, there were **only 3 BAME chief executives and 15 BAME executives** (including the 3 chief executives) out of 330 executives – the equivalent of 4.5%. The research further highlighted that **nearly three-quarters of housing associations had an executive team that was completely White, and two were led entirely by White male executives**. Crucially, findings also revealed that little had changed in the previous two years when they first started to investigate diversity in senior positions in the housing sector.

2.3 Where is the housing sector now in terms of addressing the under-representation of BAME leadership? Recent work by Brady (2020) for *Inside Housing* has shown that, over time, reviewing ethnicity and diversity within the housing sector has faded away and that social purpose has made way for a focus on business growth and the development of new homes. Following the global protests against the death of George Floyd in 2020, Lynch and Levenson (2020) comment in *Inside Housing* that housing providers have gone backwards in recent years in terms of the under-representation of Black people at board and executive levels. The stark reality is a mismatch between recent supportive words and meaningful action resulting in real, lasting change in the housing sector.

2.4 Further action is crucial: Clearly there is an urgent need to create routes for BAME leadership. Recruiting more BAME candidates into executive roles is one part of a much larger jigsaw in terms of solutions and this is not necessarily as simple as adjusting recruitment processes (although reviewing recruitment is indeed important). We devised an innovative pilot programme on the logic that organisations need to work more deeply to identify and overcome barriers to **progression** for BAME staff. This will in turn create a vibrant talent pool for recruitment and ensure that BAME leaders can flourish and lead authentically.

2.5 A fresh approach to developing inclusive leadership pathways and generating organisational change: Many well-intentioned diversity programmes are built upon a *deficit view* which assumes that institutions themselves are blameless and that marginalised groups bear individual responsibility for failing to progress to senior roles (Bhopal, 2018). Our pilot programme was different. This programme was not about 'fixing' BAME staff to fit into a

career pathway that turns out to be well designed for White staff. BAME employees navigating careers do not require investment because they are inherently deficient but because they face a context that is less favourable to them than their White counterparts. Instead, our programme was a means of challenging and supporting GMHP to develop more empowering and inclusive career pathways. Our programme provided BAME Mentees with career mentoring but its core aim was to go further: utilising the open exchange between Mentor and Mentee to identify barriers to BAME progression, sharing this with a Change Champion and the programme community and communicating to colleagues and senior leaders to push for change.

2.6 Empowering (White) leaders to advocate for change: We know that there are many (White) senior leaders in organisations (including GMHP) who are motivated to do more to address the under-representation of BAME employees in leadership roles. They perhaps do not know where to start, not least because talking about race and ethnicity is often awkward and uncomfortable or can even feel risky. This programme embraced open discussion about race and ethnicity through an opening workshop that established trust and ground rules, in reciprocal mentoring relationships and by empowering established leaders as Change Champions to form a triangle with a mentoring pair and to work with them to become change agents. It sought to create safe spaces to explore the disadvantage that BAME employees face and to raise the consciousness of White people, so they recognise BAME experiences and the privilege that 'Whiteness' bestows in a racialised world. Crucially, the intention was to facilitate the commitment, awareness, careful reflection and confidence of (White) leaders, so they grew to become change agents, galvanised to utilise their power to do the work of making meaningful organisational change and creating fairer leadership pathways for all.

Crucially, our programme takes the onus off BAME staff themselves to push for change and, instead, raises commitment and capability in White colleagues and leaders. This is a delicate balancing act, as clearly we do want to give BAME staff voice and an opportunity to lead. We include BAME Mentees in teams (with Mentors and Change Champions) and programme communities but also clearly give organisational leaders (most of whom are White) responsibility for change.

2.7 A note on language: We utilised the term BAME in this pilot programme (and utilise this term throughout this report) to refer to individuals who identify as Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic heritage. However, we are aware of the complexities of the term. BAME groups are not homogenous and there are considerable differences within and between different BAME groups. We utilised the verb Minoritized as opposed to the more commonly utilised noun Minority to reflect that racial inequality is a result of societal prejudice. We utilised the term politically to highlight the subordination of ethnic groups in relation to the dominant (White) group who have disproportionate political, financial and social power.

We are aware that people have differing opinions on (in)appropriate terminology and its use. In recent years there have been calls to stop using terms including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) as some consider them outdated and serving to mask the disadvantages suffered by specific ethnic and cultural groups. We suggest that this could be part of future conversations started in this programme.

3. What did the *Championing Change for Black, Asian and Minoritized Ethnic Leadership* Pilot Programme Involve?

3.1 Programme aims: *Championing Change for BAME Leadership* was a pioneering pilot programme involving 13 housing providers across GMHP that used reciprocal mentoring and change agents to:

- support the career progression of BAME Mentees.
- use the trusted space in reciprocal mentoring relationships to unearth organisational barriers to BAME progression.
- activate a collective of Change Champions, Mentors and Mentees across GMHP to communicate barriers, advocate for change and use privileged access to senior leaders to design and facilitate organisational change processes.

3.2 Programme participant recruitment and selection (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions): The pilot programme sought to develop BAME staff to progress to senior leadership positions. It therefore sought to encourage BAME employees already in relatively senior positions within each of the 13 housing providers involved in the programme to apply

to become a Mentee. Potential Mentees did this by completing a Mentee application form. This invited them to outline why they wanted to participate in the pilot programme and reflect on where they felt they were in their careers. To support the matching process, potential Mentees were also asked to identify the skills and experience they would ideally like their Mentor to have and the main development opportunities they wanted to work on with their Mentor.

Mentors were in a leadership/executive role within each of the 13 housing providers involved in the programme and as such, were overwhelmingly White. Again, Mentors were invited to apply to become a Mentor on the programme and did this by completing a Mentor application form which provided information on why they felt the programme was important, their skills and experience and what they hoped to gain from being a Mentor on this particular programme.

Thirteen BAME Mentees within the housing providers involved were selected to participate in the pilot programme (in the majority of cases this was one Mentee from each housing provider). They were matched with a Mentor in a leadership/executive role within GMHP during a matching session conducted by GMHP. Most Mentees were located in management roles in a diverse array of areas within housing including customer experience; IT; sales; revenue; accounts and homes and services. A few Mentees were in earlier career positions. This was largely because some housing providers reported not having BAME employees in further along career positions, serving to highlight the need for this programme.

Mentors were matched with Mentees *external* to their own organisation for two reasons: first, to support open learning about barriers to BAME progression within the mentoring dyads, without the risk of career penalty, and; second, to share learning and change processes across the Partnership.

Box 1: The 13 Partnerships across GMHP involved in the pilot programme:

- Arawak Walton Housing Association
- Bolton at Home
- First Choice Homes
- ForViva
- Irwell Valley Homes
- Johnnie Johnson Housing
- MSV Housing
- Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
- Salix Homes
- Southway Housing
- Stockport Homes
- The Riverside Group
- Trafford Housing Trust

3.3 Reciprocal mentoring relationships: Mentees and Mentors worked together for 14-months (including a programme pause of two months due to COVID-19) and were encouraged to meet for an hour once a month. The Mentor provided advocacy and guidance to support the Mentee's career development, a vital resource for BAME staff whom – evidence tells us – often miss out on more *informal* career mentoring. Establishing more *formal* partnerships is important as *informal* mentoring can serve to perpetuate social exclusion, because powerful (White) figures/leaders in organisations are likely to gravitate towards people 'like them' (Woolnough and Fielden, 2017).

In our (formal) pilot programme, BAME Mentees and Mentors (majority White) were encouraged to reflect together on the obstacles and opportunities that enable BAME employees to fulfil their potential at work. In this way, **the reciprocal mentoring became a route to investigate organisational barriers to progression for BAME staff and to facilitate organisational change.** We believe that when senior leaders mentor up-and-coming BAME employees, they become much more aware of the additional challenges BAME employees face in developing their careers. The reciprocal mentoring approach empowered and motivated senior leaders to act as change agents to create more inclusive workplaces and create wider organisational change beyond the Mentee-Mentor partnership. This was a key

feature of the pilot programme. Whilst evidence tells us that learning occurs *within* successful mentoring relationships and benefits the immediate Mentee-Mentor partnership, this programme also took the learning *outside* of the mentoring partnerships to create wider organisational change for all.

3.4 The *Breaking The Silence Enquiry Tool*: Reflection was supported by an *'Enquiry Tool'* called *Breaking The Silence*. This is a short, engaging document that summarises some of the factors that research has found to cause the under-representation of BAME staff in leadership roles and poses 'enquiring questions' to help the reader reflect on what is going on in their own context and plan change. The purpose of *Breaking The Silence Enquiry Tool* was to support discussion within confidential mentoring relationships of the issues going on in GMHP and to identify avenues for change. Talking about race is often difficult and uncomfortable and many people shy away from such conversations for fear of saying the 'wrong thing.' The *Enquiry Tool* provided a means of initiating and supporting dialogue and conversations about race and ethnicity within trusted mentoring partnerships.

3.5 The role of *Change Champions*: Crucially, this programme also involved 13 *Change Champions*. Change Champions were senior leaders nominated by each of the housing providers involved in the pilot programme to represent their organisation and be the voice to support other voices to advocate for organisational change. Change Champions were often in Human Resource/Organisational Development/Diversity and Inclusion roles and were overwhelmingly White. They were open to feedback from the mentoring process and facilitated ongoing conversations at senior levels so that leadership pathways become fairer for everybody.

Change Champions were informed and motivated by engaging in regular discussions with the Mentee and Mentor from within the respective Change Champion's organisation. They shared factors causing the under-representation of BAME staff in leadership roles and explored avenues for change. The *Enquiry Tool* was shared with Change Champions to inform and support their conversations and reflections. Our programme also encouraged the 13 Change Champions from across GMHP to self-organise into a change collective and to use their privileged access to senior leaders to design and facilitate organisational change processes within their own organisations and across GMHP. Change Champions were

encouraged to act on learning from the Mentor-Mentee dyad to which they belonged and to learn from other dyads.

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Box 2: What is *Reciprocal Mentoring* and how was it used as a vehicle for organisational change?

Reciprocal mentoring is a shift away from traditional mentoring whereby the focus is exclusively on the Mentee's development in a career context and Mentors are viewed in terms of how they can help the Mentee.

In *reciprocal* (or sometimes called *relational)* mentoring, relationships are a 'two-way street' where both Mentees and Mentors actively learn from each other (Ragins, 2016).

This pilot programme took reciprocal mentoring one step further by adding another dimension to mentoring which was about creating wider organisational change beyond the Mentee-Mentor partnership. The reciprocal mentoring approach we advocated aimed to empower and motivate senior leaders to act as change agents to create more inclusive workplaces.

Specifically, **Change Champions**, as senior leaders nominated by each of the 13 housing providers involved in the pilot programme to represent their organisation, were open to feedback and learning from the mentoring process. They facilitated ongoing conversations at senior levels within their respective organisations and across GMHP to continue to push for wider organisational change.

This was designed to create a 'triangle' of Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion working and reflecting together to create fairer leadership pathways for staff of BAME heritage. This was a unique design feature of this pilot programme.

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3.6 Adopting the identity of *Tempered Radicals*: Ultimately, we encouraged Change Champions as well as Mentees and Mentors to take on the identities of *Tempered Radicals* – people who are committed to working for BAME equality by using their power or acting as a collective to advocate for change even when this is uncomfortable (Meyerson, 2001). As part of this process, we encouraged reflection and skill development through **training and peer learning groups**.

3.7 Initial data collation on BAME under-representation: Research tells us that collating and monitoring data is crucial to creating a diverse workforce as this information gives employers key insights into under-representation. However, research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) showed that while three-quarters (77 per cent) of employers surveyed said workforce diversity was a priority, only 36 per cent said they kept data on ethnicity. Change processes to support BAME leadership are more likely to be successful if the 'problem' of under-representation is properly presented through quantification and the need for change is established as an organisational, not an individual need. Diagnosis aims to bring the situation and causes of BAME disadvantage in GMHP to light and to motivate whole community change. This can then support the tracking of BAME representation in leadership pathways going forwards. We therefore encouraged each participating housing provider (via the Change Champions) to collate data on BAME representation within their organisation to a specified template.

3.8 Main elements of the pilot programme: Our pilot programme was launched via a full day training session with Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions at Southway Housing Trust in October 2019 and included a variety of training, development and reflection opportunities for programme participants. Figure 1 outlines the main elements of the *Championing Change for BAME Leadership Pilot* Programme including the key elements of the launch event.

3.9 Unforeseen societal influences: COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter (BLM): The pilot programme was initially designed to last for 12-months but we could never have anticipated COVID-19. When COVID-19 hit (and in agreement with GMHP) we paused the majority of programme delivery for two/three months (April-June 2020) to allow for a period of reflection and re-adjustment. Undoubtably, the impact of COVID-19 on all of our personal and working lives affected programme momentum for a period of time. Where possible, we encouraged mentoring partnerships to continue their monthly meetings online.

In May 2020, the murder of George Floyd ignited a wave of national and global protest focusing on a demand to end institutional racism. Workplaces across the UK and the globe have opened themselves up to uncomfortable but crucial conversations about social inequality and racial bias due to the Black Lives Matter movement. The fact that this pilot

programme was operating within this context served to re-focus attention on the aims and objectives of this work and the need for GMHP to come together to make lasting change, even in the context of COVID-19.

Figure 1: The main elements of the *Championing Change for BAME Leadership Pilot Programme*

ELEMENT 1 PILOT PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (Man Met and GMHP)	This included: • Briefings delivered by Man Met with leaders from within each of the housing providers involved outlining the aims and objectives of the pilot programme. • Meetings with the leadership team throughout the pilot programme. • GMHP Internal programme co-ordinator. • Man Met programme development, training, facilitation and research team.
ELEMENT 2 1 DAY LAUNCH EVENT WITH TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES (October 2019) For all programme participants (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions)	This included: • Participation of senior leaders within GMHP to demonstrate organisational commitment to promoting BAME leadership. • Role model panel consisting of BAME leaders discussing their stories and routes to leadership: ➢ *Sofia Higgins* - Equalities Specialist, Manchester City Council (MCC). ➢ *Sharmila Kar* - Director of Workforce and Organisational Development for Manchester Health and Care Commissioning (MHCC). ➢ *Ashwin Kumar* – Professor of Social Policy, Manchester Metropolitan University. • Creative space for networking. • Outlining and utilising the *Breaking The Silence Enquiry Tool.* • Outlining the role of the Mentee and Mentor and of associated ethical contracting and supervision arrangements. • Space for Mentees and Mentors to engage in their first face-to-face mentoring session. Identifying needs and expectations between individual Mentees and Mentors. Encouraging mentoring partnerships to meet once a month thereafter.

	• Developing Mentors and Mentees as agents for change within GMHP, empowered and committed to generate better leadership routes for BAME employees. • A facilitated session with Change Champions to explore their role as agents for change within GMHP, empowered and committed to generate better leadership routes for BAME employees.
ELEMENT 3 RECIPROCAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS (Throughout) For Mentees and Mentors	These included: • Mentee and Mentor meeting once a month for approximately one hour. • Reflecting together on the obstacles and opportunities that enable BAME employees to fulfil their potential at work. • Exploring career opportunities for Mentees. • Motivating senior leaders to act as change agents to create more inclusive workplaces and create wider organisational change beyond the Mentee-Mentor partnership. • Mentees work shadowing Mentors for at least one day over the course of the mentoring relationship to gain valuable insights into the nuances of leadership roles, which BAME employees may otherwise be unable to access *(NB: This element of the programme proved particularly difficult during COVID-19).*
ELEMENT 4 DATA COLLATION For all participating Partnerships	This included: • Change Champions (with colleagues) collating data on BAME under-representation within their organisation to a specified template with the aim to track BAME representation in leadership pathways moving forwards.
ELEMENT 5 FACILITATED PEER AND ACTION LEARNING SETS 2 for Mentees (December 2019 and October 2020)	These included: • Facilitation by *Claire Pattison* (Enterprise Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University) a highly experienced action learning set facilitator. • Providing Mentees and Mentors with an opportunity to discuss their evolving mentoring relationships and support Mentees and Mentors to develop their voices as change agents. • Providing Mentees and Mentors with a forum to learn from each other, exchange stories and engage in shared learning.

1 for Mentors (August 2020)	• Encouraging cross organisational relationships. • Supporting networking. • Helping to sustain programme momentum.
ELEMENT 6 CLOSING EVENT (January 2021) For all programme participants (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions)	This involved: • A final event held online (due to COVID-19) bringing all programme participants together. • Preliminary research findings shared. • Focus on celebrating programme successes and shared learning experiences. • Addressing next steps for GMHP and embedding longer term organisational change to generate better routes for BAME leadership. • Highlighting the importance of building on programme momentum.
ELEMENT 7 RESEARCH (Throughout) Involved all programme participants (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions)	This involved: • Securing research ethics approval from Manchester Metropolitan University. • One-to-one, semi-structured interviews and focus groups (through peer and action learning sets) with Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions. • Assessment of programme effectiveness and how it created organisational change. • Lessons learnt from the programme. • Insights into any modifications to be made before recruiting additional Mentees and Mentors/developing phase 2. • Providing recommendations. • Final report addressing the above.

4. The Research Process

4.1 Research aims: The pilot programme was subject to research, to assess its effectiveness, identify how it created change and to provide recommendations for the future. Research questions emanated from the original programme aims. Box 3 below outlines the main research questions.

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Box 3: Main Research Questions

1. To what extent – and how - does the *Championing Change for BAME Leadership Pilot Programme* support the career progression of Mentees to create future BAME leaders within GMHP?

2. How is the trusted space in reciprocal mentoring relationships utilised to unearth organisational barriers to BAME progression?

3. How effective are the reciprocal mentoring relationships as a route to investigate issues and facilitate organisational change?

4. How is the role of Change Champion experienced, as the organisational representative to support other voices to advocate for organisational change?

5. How does the programme encourage senior leaders to reflect on the importance and legitimacy of White leaders creating change? How well does the programme build culture and confidence to talk about race and support White leaders to act as *Tempered Radicals?*

6. To what extent – and how - does the programme activate a collective of Change Champions, Mentors and Mentees across GMHP to communicate barriers, advocate for change and use privileged access to senior leaders to design and facilitate organisational change processes?

7. To what extent is organisational change to make leadership pathways fairer for everyone achieved and what does that look like?

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4.2 Data collation and analysis: One-to-one, semi-structured interviews and focus groups (through peer and action learning sets) were conducted with Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions. Prior to COVID-19, data was collated either face-to-face or via telephone. During COVID-19, data was collated via online meeting platforms. Information regarding next steps for GMHP was also collated from the (online) closing event attended by Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions. Research data was recorded (with permission) and analysed using a process of thematic analysis.

4.3 Interviews and focus groups with Mentees and Mentors: Interviews and focus groups with Mentees and Mentors focussed on themes including:

- *experiences and/or perceptions of obstacles and challenges to BAME leadership within career pathways including GMHP.*
- *the effectiveness of the reciprocal mentoring partnerships in terms of supporting career progression and providing a trusted space within which to discuss and reflect on barriers to BAME progression.*
- *investigating avenues for change within housing partnerships and across GMHP.*
- *exploring the motivation to act as change agents to create more inclusive workplaces as a result of experiencing the pilot programme.*
- *addressing the effectiveness of the 'triangle' relationship of Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion in facilitating a route to senior leadership and generating change.*
- *activating change collectives to facilitate organisational change processes.*

4.4 Interviews with Change Champions: Interviews with Change Champions covered many of the same themes addressed with Mentees and Mentors. These interviews were also designed to ascertain:

- *the effectiveness of the Change Champion role as the organisational representative to support other voices to advocate for organisational change.*
- *the extent to which the programme encouraged the activation of a Change Champion collective using their privileged access to senior leaders to design and facilitate organisational change processes both within their own organisations and across GMHP.*

4.5: Information collated from the closing event: During breakout room discussions, attendees (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions) were invited to consider the following three questions and report back to the main plenary session to feed into planning *next steps* for GMHP:

- *What do we need to do to continue to support Mentees to progress as BAME leaders within GMHP?*

- *What more needs to be done to support Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions work together as groups?*

- *What should GMHP be doing at a higher level?*

4.6 Ethical considerations: Participation in the research process was entirely voluntary and not dependent on programme involvement. Furthermore, we assured participants of confidentiality in the reporting of results. This is in keeping with Manchester Metropolitan University's robust research ethics procedures, for which approval was granted before data collation commenced.

5. Main Research Findings

Research findings are presented in relation to key themes extrapolated from the data analysis and quotations are utilised to illustrate findings where appropriate. Recommendations in relation to each key theme are presented to support GMHP to champion change for BAME leadership.

5.1 The effectiveness of reciprocal mentoring relationships

Reciprocal mentoring relationships were created to provide Mentees with career support in developing their leadership pathways, thereby building a talent pool of future BAME leaders within GMHP. Crucially, the pilot programme built upwards from these reciprocal mentoring relationships in that they were constructed as a route to investigate issues influencing the under-representation of BAME employees in leadership roles and facilitate organisational change. This process then empowered and motivated senior leaders (i.e., Mentors and Change Champions) to act as change agents to create more inclusive workplaces.

5.1.1. Supporting the career progression of BAME Mentees: Mentees and Mentors for the most part, revealed the value of the reciprocal mentoring relationships created during the programme. Mentees particularly commented on the empowering nature of the mentoring relationships and the value of information and networks to which they would not normally have access.

> *My Mentor's been fantastic. We had a pause when lockdown started but we started meeting again and that's been great. Part of being on this course was about how we can influence change in the mentor's organisation as well so we've had discussions about that and what they've been doing and what they can do* (Mentee).

> *The mentoring relationship has been great. (Mentor) has helped me think about leadership and what operating at that senior level is like. I've been introduced to people that (Mentor) works with that I wouldn't have really come across if I hadn't had a mentor on this programme* (Mentee).

To date, two of 13 Mentees have been promoted into more senior positions within the housing sector. Both Mentees highlighted the invaluable support and guidance of their Mentors in securing these promotions. This means that two Mentees are now further along

in their leadership careers as a direct result of experiencing this pilot programme. Although securing promotion was not an aim or expectation of the programme, this encouraging finding does reiterate the value of formal mentoring relationships as a means of career support to aid BAME employees in their attempts to advance.

> *In terms of opportunities, it's been really good. (Mentor) has given me great advice in terms of navigating the difficulties of leadership and promotion opportunities etc. My Mentor's helped link me up with (equivalent post) in (Mentor's) organisation*
> (Mentee).

Some Mentors noted that their Mentee was too early career to apply for a leadership post. This may be a point of reflection but we are aware that a key problem for organisations, and indeed the Partnership, is that BAME colleagues become stuck in early career positions and so unblocking these early routes to leadership pathways is also powerful. It is also important to note that a minority of mentoring relationships did not progress during the course of the programme. It appeared that change in job roles (Mentors or Mentees changing jobs within GMHP or leaving the Partnership or sector) and time constraints affected the extent to which some mentoring relationships 'worked.' The programme team worked to support participants where this was the case by creating alternative mentoring partnerships. A key 'takeaway' here is that mentoring requires ongoing observation and action by programme operators.

5.1.2: Discussing and reflecting on organisational barriers to BAME progression: Many Mentees bravely shared their experiences within their mentoring partnerships. In doing so, most Mentors reported being made more aware of the additional challenges their BAME Mentees have faced in developing their careers. This made them more motivated to create inclusive workplaces as a result of their mentoring experience:

> *I'm passionate about under-representation and we're massively under-represented on BAME. I thought I could bring my experience to this and hopefully learn as well about some of the challenges that I might not be aware of ….and I certainly wasn't*
> (Mentor).

My Mentee has challenged me to think about some of our practices here. We were aware of some things but (Mentee) has challenged me to think more about things including our recruitment practices. We've recently set up a BAME working group and I think that will really help us move forward as an organisation on this agenda (Mentor).

The majority of Mentees and Mentors reflected that the fact the Mentor was external to the Mentee's host organisation supported this learning process, without the risk of career penalty. It also provided an opportunity to share ideas and change processes across the Partnership.

I think the fact that the Mentors were external has been a real plus because that's sort of allowed a few things really, a level of honesty in one instance but the second thing is the challenge from the different perspective, that a different organisation does it in a different way. So, I think that's worked really well (Mentor).

Not all mentoring relationships were able to activate discussions to uncover and discuss challenges to BAME progression. Time pressures (and COVID-19) influenced the ability of some mentoring partnerships to meet regularly and build the rapport required to create the trusted space for meaningful discourse. In a few cases, Mentors were committed to the learning experience but found this difficult to achieve.

My mentoring relationship has had some challenges. I think my Mentee came to the programme feeling that they hadn't really experienced any issues in relation to their race or ethnicity. It was pretty much a career development opportunity, so I found it hard to learn more about barriers in relation to race because (Mentee) didn't feel able to share any' (Mentor).

As noted, when introducing the term BAME earlier in this report, people of ethnic heritage do not all have the same experiences of racial unfairness. Some are protected by advantages such as being a man, well-educated or of mainstream religion (i.e., Christian or atheist), being born into British culture or being of an ethnicity that is stereotypically more associated with progression and leadership (e.g., Chinese and Indian heritage verses African heritage). Organisations also vary in how far they have already come in tackling issues of race and ethnicity so that some staff may be protected, at least in their current role. And some people

may not choose to recognise discrimination and may not reflect on observing unfairness suffered by friends or kin or to share it with a Mentor. It is always likely that some Mentors will struggle to learn about racialized workplaces from Mentees when their reflections are limited by these contexts and patterns of awareness.

I've never felt at any time that there's blockers or something stopping me because of my ethnicity, that's never been an issue, so I don't know if that just means I'm fortunate because I'm aware in other places that's not the case (Mentee).

5.1.3: Creating future Mentors: Evidence tells us that the longer-term value of investing in formal mentoring programmes is that Mentees tend to become Mentors (both *formal* and *informal*) later on. The programme empowered some Mentees to either take up or consider mentoring others in the future and a number of Mentors signalled their intention to mentor other BAME employees. Also, some mentoring partnerships revealed their commitment to continuing the relationship beyond the end of this pilot programme. Thus, we hope that our programme has encouraged the creation of existing and future Mentors committed to supporting aspiring BAME future leaders.

From my point of view the relationship has been really, really effective and positive, so much so that's it's something that I would look at myself in terms of mentoring others moving forwards because I think it's been so positive from my point of view (Mentee).

5.1.4: Creating change collectives of Mentees and Mentors: A key mechanism for creating change in individual housing providers and the Partnership was the development of collectives. Both the Change Champions and the some of the Mentees have formed collectives that are working together, beyond the auspices of the programme, to drive awareness of inequalities facing BAME staff and developing leadership pathways. Mentors have not, yet, formed as much of an active collective. However, a number of Mentors also adopted the role of Change Champion within their respective housing providers and are committed to generating change as part of this collective.

Future programmes could make the formation of collectives a more explicit aim and create mechanisms for their development. The Change Champion collective was ignited following some additional training for Change Champions, provided in response to an

awareness that this area of the programme needed further energy. The Mentee network emerged out of discussion and meeting in Action Learning Sets which were also a part of the research process. In both instances, the collectives emerged from the course leaders calling for someone within the group to take a lead in organising meetings and depended on an enthusiastic person, or people, stepping forwards. In future programmes, these roles should be resourced and recognised and workshops should be developed that enable the bonding of the groups and the emergence of leadership. This activity is necessary for the Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions.

All-programme events, such as the closing event, are also powerful in galvanising a sense of community and development of a joint movement in the Partnership and these should also be part of future programmes.

5.1.5: Key recommendations for future reciprocal mentoring relationships as a route to organisational change:

- Mentees should come to the mentoring relationship keen to share experiences and explore avenues for change with their Mentor and Change Champion to create fairer leadership pathways for BAME employees. Skillful mentoring and being part of a Mentee commitment and all-programme community may be very important to enabling more reserved (or personally advantaged) Mentees to feel safe and able to bring forwards the barriers they face or see around them.
- Mentors to be open to hearing about blockages to career progression for BAME staff and exploring opportunities for change.
- Mentors should be *external* to the Mentee's host organisation to support learning about barriers to BAME progression, without the risk of career penalty, and to share learning and change processes across the Partnership.
- Mentees and Mentors should commit to meeting once a month to develop the mentoring relationship and build rapport so that a trusted space where open conversation can be had is created.
- Further support should be built into future programmes for Mentees and Mentors to encourage them to form change collectives.

5.2 Unearthing organisational barriers to BAME progression through reciprocal mentoring.

Here, some of the main obstacles to BAME progression and opportunities that enable BAME employees to fulfil their potential at work captured through the mentoring process are outlined to support GMHP in further reflecting on avenues for change. Encouragingly, some of these issues are already being addressed and acted on by Change Champions as a Collective across GMHP or within specific housing providers.

5.2.1 Role models: You can't be what you can't see: Most Mentees were acutely aware of the lack of BAME leadership within GMHP and cited this as a barrier to their career progression. The absence of BAME role models may serve to signal that diversity is undervalued and that progression for BAME employees is problematic. This is consistent with existing research which cites a lack of access to BAME role models as a major barrier to career advancement. Seeing other BAME leaders in senior roles gives aspiring BAME Mentees hope that they can achieve the same, particularly when role models are from the same minority ethnic or religious group. Mentees in particular (but also other programme participants) reported being inspired by the role model panel of BAME leaders sharing their experiences and routes to leadership at the pilot programme launch event. The power of storytelling in this context was evident.

5.2.2 Line managers as gatekeepers: A number of Mentees reported either experiencing or witnessing poor line management as a barrier to career progression and promotion. Some Mentees considered that line managers were actively blocking promotion, whereas others felt that managers were unable to provide sufficient experience and guidance to support future leadership careers (and therefore found support from their Mentors invaluable).

Some Mentees observed that, when more senior posts become available, White employees are usually and possibly unfairly promoted. In some cases, there was a feeling that explicit racism was at play. Others questioned the direct influence of race and ethnicity but still expressed concern that BAME employees do not experience promotion in the same way as their White counterparts. This, along with hearing about discriminatory experiences in Action Learning Sets, made some more confident that there is unfairness related to race. This seems to reflect complex problems in which barriers to BAME leadership accumulate so that

BAME staff are not fairly prepared to compete for senior management roles and, possibly, a culture of leadership founded on White norms that discourages BAME staff from feeling able to progress. For example, if teams or leaders socialise in pubs this can exclude staff from heritages that avoid alcohol, and if important discussions happen in socialising conducted after work, colleagues with family responsibilities are excluded. Lack of awareness of religious festivals also means that colleagues rhythms of life are not accommodated well and they feel that they must leave that culture 'at the door' as a GMHP leader. There were also reports of more directly racist behaviour by some line managers and this raises the importance of GMHP ensuring that such behaviour is clearly out of place in its culture and values and making safe spaces so that staff can report incidents without fear of career detriment.

5.2.3 Challenging the norm of a White leadership culture and valuing ethnic capital: Organisational research suggests that the norms that shape leadership practice are often founded in White culture and this means that BAME colleagues have to leave any ethnic culture 'at the door' in order to progress. This can prevent them from flourishing at work and means organisations miss out on the wider awareness of diverse customers and staff that BAME leaders can bring to decision making. Some Mentees expressed these kinds of concerns in relation to GMHP.

We know that a key advantage of diverse leadership teams is that they understand and value a wider array of customers. Some Mentees have suggested a link between the predominance of White leadership in housing associations and their strategic priorities and practices in relation to housing provision and suggests a need to facilitate the voices of BAME staff in strategic and operational leadership. Some researchers have proposed a concept called 'ethnic capital'. This is a form of human and social capital and it refers to having scarce and valuable knowledge of an ethnic community. An exciting future direction might be for GMHP to identify ethnic capital in their BAME staff and value this as a key leadership capacity and organisational resource.

5.2.4 Reviewing recruitment and selection processes: Recruitment and selection processes are vital to creating diverse and inclusive workplaces and therefore warrant considered investigation. The necessity of reflecting on and changing the recruitment and selection processes of housing providers has been identified by some Change Champions and Mentors as crucial to facilitating organisational change in GMHP. For example, existing research outlining better practice includes a robust monitoring of the diversity profile of applicants, what happens (and why) throughout the application process (e.g., where posts are advertised, who is headhunted or invited to apply, shortlisted, rejected at interview etc.) and ensuring that all those involved in recruitment and selection have the relevant equalities training and adheres to this in both the process and spirit of their recruitment practice. Applications may also be anonymised to protect BAME applicants from selection bias related to the ethnicity associated with their name. There is undoubtedly a range of innovative recruitment ideas available and there is an appetite for housing providers to research these and share good practice. Indeed, some Change Champions have already reported sharing ideas of better practice across GMHP in relation to reviewing recruitment procedures.

5.2.5 What is measured, matters. The importance of data collation: Collecting robust data is a crucial component of creating fairer leadership pathways as having such data gives leaders insights into the blockages and inequalities they need to address to ensure that BAME employees enjoy a working environment that allows them to reach their full potential. Man Met attempted to access meaningful data on BAME representation within the 13 organisations involved in the programme by asking each housing provider to complete a data template based on pay. This was because change processes to support BAME leadership are more likely to be successful if the 'problem' of under-representation is properly presented through quantification and the need for change is established as an organisational, not an individual, need. However, collating this information proved problematic because of the different ways in which this data is recorded (or not) across GMHP. Several organisations did not have the required data or could not resource the process of data reporting. Only six housing associations returned the data template. Of those six, few employees from a BAME background were located within the Leadership Group, with no BAME senior leaders in some associations. Overall, BAME employees (both male and female) were far less likely to be in senior roles than their White counterparts, highlighting the need for action.

Since Man Met requested this data, GMHP have embarked on a process to capture diversity data through the Diversity, Inclusion, Community Cohesion and Equalities (DICE) Group. The DICE survey (2020) collected benchmarking data to allow those participating organisations within GMHP to assess where they are in relation to diversity and inclusion and compare themselves with other providers in the Partnership. Results from the DICE survey clearly identifies BAME under-representation across the Partnership. This *Championing Change for BAME Leadership Pilot Programme* features in the subsequent DICE report as an example of where organisations are taking action to address issues highlighted through data collection. It is hoped that GMHP builds on this work and continues to monitor relevant and meaningful data within and across organisations. Encouragingly, Change Champions through their involvement in this programme, have committed to Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting to focus attention and drive action.

5.2.6: Key recommendations for GMHP to further address organisational barriers to BAME leadership:

- Make BAME role models more visible across GMHP to signal that diversity in leadership is valued.
- Train and incentivise line managers to recognise barriers to BAME leadership and to value and nurture BAME staff.
- Conduct work to make safer spaces away from line management to enable BAME staff to report incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including by line managers, without fear of career detriment.
- GMHP could work to identify ethnic capital in their BAME staff and to value this as a key leadership capacity and organisational resource.
- GMHP may seek to review and audit existing recruitment and selection processes and decision-making to determine the extent to which these may be blocking BAME employees from accessing leadership pathways.
- Continue to collate valuable data on BAME representation within organisations and across the Partnership to inform subsequent action. This is likely to require an exploration of appropriate data collation methodologies to facilitate comparison across organisations.

5.3 The crucial role of *Change Champions* in creating and sustaining organisational change

The Change Champion role was pivotal to programme success and their involvement was part of making this programme different from other 'off-the-shelf' leadership initiatives. Change Champions were required to listen to the learning regarding barriers and opportunities that enable BAME employees to fulfil their potential at work from *within* the mentoring partnership and use their voices to take this learning *outside* the immediate Mentee-Mentor dyad and push for change at senior levels.

5.3.1 The importance of investing in the role of *Change Champion*: Change Champions met as a collective for the first time at the programme launch event. During that time, an initial introductory session was held with Change Champions and facilitated by Man Met to support the start of their journey as change agents and self-organising as a collective. However, our pilot programme initially focussed most of its resources on the process of reciprocal mentoring and, so, on developing Mentees and Mentors. A point of reflection is that it became clear over time that the role of the Change Champion required further clarity and that more investment was needed to develop Change Champions as a collective. Having spotted this challenge during the programme, changes were made to foster the role of Change Champion and the collective. We rectified this by adding in a training session for Change Champions and this proved a turning point to galvanising this collective.

'I think the concept of having the Change Champions and the reciprocal mentoring was brilliant. I'm not sure that everybody got that' (Change Champion).

'This whole thing about the reciprocal mentoring didn't seem to be getting through and it was like, if we don't do that, this is the same as any other mentoring programme, we could have done it anywhere. The really, really important thing is the organisational learning, you know, the mentoring is the nice to have for the people that have been on the programme and that's what's in it for them, but actually, what we want from them is to learn from their experience and give them that opportunity to talk about it' (Change Champion).

5.3.2 Supporting the role of *Change Champions* as the voice to advocate for organisational change: Man Met provided a complimentary workshop which; re-visited the programme aims; explored the role of Change Champion as a voice to advocate for organisational change by engaging with and learning from the Mentee and Mentor within their host organisation; and supporting and empowering Change Champions to self-organise into a change collective, committed to generating better routes for BAME leadership across GMHP. This workshop was generally well received by Change Champions. The workshop was delivered when the programme resumed following the pause due to COVID-19 (July 2020) and was instrumental in helping rebuild momentum among Change Champions. It is also important to acknowledge that some changes in who occupied the Change Champion role were made within certain housing providers over the course of the pilot programme. This workshop also provided those more newly appointed Change Champions with important programme information and an opportunity to meet (albeit virtually) their respective counterparts.

5.3.3 Activating a collective of *Change Champions*: Further to the workshop with Change Champions, those who had not met with the Mentee and Mentor from their organisation committed to doing so as a route to investigating issues affecting BAME progression and facilitating organisational change. Change Champions also diarised monthly meetings to continue their conversations and work towards collaboratively generating change. The following Change Champions commented:

'After the training session, it got things moving a bit more. We're meeting regularly now and in many ways, it feels like we're just getting started as a group' (Change Champion).

It was encouraging to hear the passion that many Change Champions felt about their learning from engaging with this programme and that mentoring relationships were indeed acting as a route to organisational change via their learning:

'I've met with our Mentee a few times now. I've never had those sorts of conversations with (Mentee) before.. hearing about how (Mentee) feels their career has been stifled over the years due to other people's assumptions. I never would have had those conversations had it not been for these sessions. It's really good for people at much more senior levels to hear about it' (Change Champion).

'It's been great to get together with people who share a passion for this work. A lot of us are White. We've not been given the opportunity before to be curious. And it feels like we've been given a safe space to really get down into asking questions where it's okay to ask those questions. So, we're learning ourselves. I would never have dreamt of going up to someone from the BAME community and asking them things. I would have felt disrespectful, a bit cheeky. But I've found a safe space within the programme to have those conversations. I'm learning that it's good to talk' (Change Champion).

Change Champions commented that sharing better practice across the Partnership and learning from each other had been an invaluable part of coming together as a group of Change Champions.

I've met a group of people I wouldn't have met had it not been for this programme. It's been good to see what others are doing in their organisations and sharing that learning. Some (housing providers) are doing some great things and it's important for us to tap into that (Change Champion).

In using their voices to push for change at senior organisational levels, the collective presented a briefing paper to the GMHP Chief Executive group in September 2020 outlining their role as Change Champions empowered to make organisational change and committing to key actions moving forwards. Specifically, Change Champions committed to:

- ***Working with Mentees and Mentors:*** to reflect on their organisation's behaviours and practices, recognising where they disadvantage BAME employees and act to make appropriate changes.
- ***Encouraging Mentees as a collective:*** to set the agenda for Change Champions to work on moving forwards.
- ***Ethnicity Pay-Gap Reporting (EPGR)*** to enable Change Champions to identify existing ethnicity pay gaps and inform their consideration of practical steps to close them. Such transparency should help focus attention and drive action.

It is worth noting again that in a few organisations, the Mentor also adopted the role of Change Champion. This may be a point of reflection moving forwards in that future programmes may encourage different people to take on each of these roles to build the 'triangle' of Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion and maximise opportunities for people in different roles within the organisation to reflect together and influence change.

5.3.4 Key recommendations to support the crucial role of *Change Champions*: In any future programmes, we would encourage further investment in Change Champions because this aspect of the programme is so pivotal to the process of using learning from the reciprocal mentoring relationships to inform and facilitate organisational change. We suggest an additional programme element:

Figure 2: Recommended additional programme element to support the *Change Champion* role	
ADDITIONAL PROGRAMME ELEMENT 1 DAY TRAINING SESSION For Change Champions *NB: A complimentary session was developed in response to programme feedback that more investment was needed to develop Change Champions (held online due to COVID-19 in July 2020). This could be longer and costed in to future proposals.*	This should involve: - Exploring the role of Change Champion. - Connecting with and building on relationships with Mentees and Mentors. - Discussing how Change Champions can create organisational change. - Sharing ideas for better practice. - Addressing the importance of engaging/continuing to engage with senior leaders. - Supporting Change Champions to self-organise into a change collective.

Additionally, existing Change Champions should be supported to:

- Continue as a collective of Change Champions. This will build on momentum generated among the community of Change Champions, particularly towards the latter part of the programme.
- Maximise opportunities for Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion to reflect together to influence change (alongside other senior leaders within respective housing providers).
- Continue to support Mentees and build on an agenda for change informed by them.

5.4 The importance of reflecting on Whiteness and the legitimacy of White leaders creating change

We often don't want to talk about race, especially at work, due to a fear of saying the wrong thing or finding out that we are not as free of racial bias as we hoped. The pilot programme encouraged White and BAME staff to talk about race safely and as part of a mutual learning process.

5.4.1. Reflecting on Whiteness: Most of the Mentors and Change Champions involved in this programme were White. They were encouraged to reflect on the privileges that accompany Whiteness and to listen hard to BAME staff and campaign for change. In short, the programme clearly advocated that, in talking about race, we must talk about Whiteness. Mentors and Change Champions bravely took on this challenge even when it was uncomfortable. For many, it was a new way of looking at race work and was embraced by programme participants in the pursuit of organisational change. One Change Champion said:

'I remember that day that we had at Southway (the programme launch) and it was actually in that programme when (Man Met) were introducing the whole concept of Whiteness and interrogating Whiteness and I'd never thought about it like that before, I mean I found that day absolutely fascinating' (Change Champion).

Research findings supported our belief that reflecting on Whiteness is a strength and integral to the work of challenging institutional practices. A Mentor commented:

'I guess for me the learning (from the mentoring relationship) is that it takes you out of yourself. It makes you reflect and think about the things that you've found worked in terms of your own personal and career development and what things made the most impact. That whole reflection process has been really helpful and really good. I've come to understand that it's very different being someone of a different colour, seeing different forms of prejudice and it's been interesting exploring some of that with (Mentee) and reflecting on my own experience as someone who's White (Mentor).

We have reflected at length on our legitimacy as White academics leading the pilot programme and conclude that it is the work of White leaders to think more deeply about the privileges that accompany our Whiteness and to really listen in to BAME staff and advocate

for change. We have pursued this learning journey alongside Mentors and Change Champions. This reflexivity from programme leaders is essential to future success.

5.4.2 The legitimacy of (White) senior leaders creating change: Research shows that diversity initiatives are much more likely to lead to meaningful and sustained change if they are championed by senior leaders. This programme is no exception. A challenge is to secure the buy-in of senior leaders to act as sponsors/allies and enact organisational change in relation to the emergent learning about barriers to BAME leadership. Programme participants (Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions) felt strongly that next steps for GMHP involve accessing senior leaders including Chief Executives and ensuring that this work is firmly on their agenda. Change Champions have started this work. By presenting this final report to GMHP, our programme leadership and research is also a part of this process.

5.4.3 Key recommendations to support the reflexivity and legitimacy of (White) senior leaders creating change:

- Support senior (White) leaders to understand the legitimacy of their role in creating change.
- Engage with the GMHP Chief Executive Group and encourage senior leaders to continue to energise the programme and be accountable for making change happen.
- Encourage further reflection on the privileges that accompany Whiteness and how power and privilege play out.
- Encourage senior leaders to act as sponsors/allies willing to reflect and challenge themselves and the behaviour of people around them to take action to bring about change.
- White leaders should also be sensitive to any leadership role that BAME staff may wish to take in the change process and to their articulation of problems and feedback on proposed action. It is vital they have an empowering, ongoing and responsive relationship with individual Mentees and the collective of Mentees.

5.5 Summary

This innovative pilot programme created 13 reciprocal mentoring partnerships across GMHP which aimed to employ close sharing of BAME experiences between up-and-coming BAME staff and senior (White) leaders to identify wider organisational problems and empower Mentors and Mentees as agents of change. Mentees and Mentors worked together for 14-months (including a programme pause of two months due to COVID-19) and were encouraged to meet for an hour once a month. The Mentor provided advocacy and guidance to support the Mentee's career development, a vital resource for BAME staff whom – evidence tells us – often miss out on more *informal* career mentoring. Mentees and Mentors were supported by a number of development opportunities including training and peer and action learning sets.

Crucially, this programme also involved 13 *Change Champions*. Change Champions were senior leaders nominated by each of the housing providers involved in the pilot programme to represent their organisation and be the voice to support other voices to advocate for organisational change. They were open to feedback from the mentoring process and facilitated ongoing conversations at senior levels so that leadership pathways become fairer for everybody. The inclusion of Change Champions worked to create a 'triangle' of Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion working and reflecting together to create fairer leadership pathways for all. This was a unique design feature of this pilot programme. The programme was devised on the logic that organisations need to work more deeply, at a cultural and process level, to identify and overcome barriers to progression for BAME staff. It was a means of challenging and supporting GMHP to develop more empowering and inclusive career pathways leading to organisational change. This way, the programme would have a lasting legacy in the form of starting a journey to form thriving BAME leadership pathways and fairer organisations.

It is important to note that housing providers began this journey at different points. A few organisations involved in the programme already had some well-established practices and processes in relation to BAME inclusion but were keen to do more and reflect further. For other organisations, less work had been done to address fairer routes for BAME leadership and the programme served as an opportunity to learn from programme participants to develop ways forward. It is also important to note that this initiative should be seen in the

context of a much larger jigsaw in terms of solutions to fully understand and overcome barriers to BAME progression.

Nevertheless, our programme worked to develop the buildings blocks for organisational change and ensure that BAME leaders across GMHP can flourish and lead authentically. It is worth noting that these building blocks for change still emerged despite the programme operating within the context of COVID-19. This is testament to the commitment of programme participants. Individual providers reported implementing initiatives to influence change including investing in *Inclusive Employers* (a leading membership organisation for employers looking to build inclusive workplaces); introducing BAME staff working and networking groups; introducing and/or reviewing diversity and inclusion policies, and; expressing a commitment to reviewing recruitment practices. Change Champions have committed to continuing their work across GMHP to embed fairer leadership pathways for staff of BAME heritage. This includes Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting to identify existing ethnicity pay gaps and inform the development of practical steps to close them.

Encouragingly, the programme closing event revealed a palpable energy and enthusiasm among participants for the continuation and further development of this work. It showed a community of *Tempered Radicals* (people prepared to work in collectives and individually to effect equality), empowered to make lasting organisational change. Participants called upon senior leaders to visibly demonstrate their commitment to the future of this work, to build on momentum and ensure sustainability. Detailed recommendations for the progression of this work across GMHP have been outlined in this report. Main recommendations are presented in Box 4 (p.44).

Working alongside academics who are aware of the evidence base about barriers to progression, able to translate this and work with GMHP to devise and amend the programme for change seems to have been a fruitful approach. Some research elements – particularly Action Learning Sets – have been powerful in galvanising shared experience and building collectives. It is our hope that this partnership approach can play a role in GMHP's next steps and we are particularly proposing the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) funding route as a means of resourcing an ongoing innovation process to generate routes for BAME leadership in GMHP.

Finally, it is our hope that learning and evidence from this innovative pilot programme can be shared with other anchor organisations and employers to help support wider change to generate routes for BAME leadership. In particular, we would welcome the opportunity to join programme participants in sharing this learning with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the Local Enterprise Partnership and Good Employment Charter. Equally, we propose that you share learning within the housing sector.

Box 4:   **Main Recommendations**

Issues for GMHP to address:

1. Engage with the GMHP Chief Executive Group and encourage senior leaders to continue to energise the programme and be accountable for making change happen. Ideally, this should involve supporting a new cohort of participants and sponsoring projects started by participants to tackle various causes of BAME inequality.
2. Support senior leaders to understand the legitimacy of their role in creating change.
3. Broaden training that helps White staff reflect on White privilege and the role of White leaders as advocates. Share stories and data that speak of barriers to leadership that press home the point that this is an organisational problem for which there is collective responsibility for change.
4. Continue to collect and publish data on BAME progression; monitor this at Board level on an annual basis.
5. Revise the pilot programme in light of suggested improvements to programme elements and encourage further participation across GMHP.
6. Continue to innovate with Manchester Metropolitan University to further develop strands of activity identified through the programme e.g., scaling the programme, reviewing recruitment practices and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting. This could be through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership Model (KTP) which would create a conduit between GMHP and Man Met to work to develop and sustain lasting change.
7. Share your learning from this pilot programme in Greater Manchester and in the housing sector to help develop place and sector-based movements to generate routes for BAME leadership.

Issues for Mentees/Mentors/Change Champions to address:

8. Continue to support Mentees to progress as BAME leaders within GMHP through reciprocal mentoring relationships.
9. Further support Mentees, Mentors and Change Champions to work together as collectives to lead organisational change to generate routes for BAME leadership in GMHP.
10. Maximise opportunities for Mentee, Mentor and Change Champion to reflect and act together to influence change (alongside other senior leaders within respective housing providers).
11. Continue to support and build on an agenda for change informed by them.

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