

Welcome to our webinar

Nurse career progression: good and fair employment practice

9 July 2026

Welcome and introduction



Caroline Waterfield,
Director of Workforce Supply
and Employment Practice,
NHS Employers

Today's focus

- Support local leaders with taking forward the nurse career progression recommendations resulting from the 2023 Agenda for Change pay deal
- Features best practice example from an NHS trust
- Hear lived experience
- Interactive Q&A with speaker panel



Speakers

- **Lord Victor Adebawale** CBE, Chair of NHS Alliance
- **Helga Pile**, Acting Head of Health at Unison
- **Andrew McMenemy**, Executive Chief People Officer, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- **Brian Morton**, Associate Director of Employment Relations, Royal College of Nursing
- **Ali Kennah**, Chief Nurse and Director of Infection Prevention and Control, North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust
- **Katie Spring**, People Development Practitioner, North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust
- **Victoria Woodjets**, Organisation Development Business Partner, North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust
- **Gifty Markey**, Associate CNO for Mental Health, Learning Disability and Neurodiversity at North Bristol NHS Trust

Good leadership is anti-racist leadership



Lord Victor Adebowale CBE,
Chair, The NHS Alliance

The importance of partnership working



Helga Pile,
Acting Head of Health,
Unison

Nurse career progression recommendations: context, implementation and next steps



Andrew McMenemy
Executive Chief People
Officer, Essex Partnership
University Foundation Trust



Brian Morton
Associate Director of
Employment Relations,
Royal College of Nursing

A quick poll

Q: What is your level of awareness and understanding around the nurse career progression recommendations and their implications for your organisation?

- a) I have not heard of the nurse career progression recommendations
- b) I am aware of the nurse career progression recommendations but do not understand their implications for my organisation or have ideas about how to implement them
- c) I am aware of the nurse career progression recommendations, understand their implications for my organisation and have some ideas on how to implement them

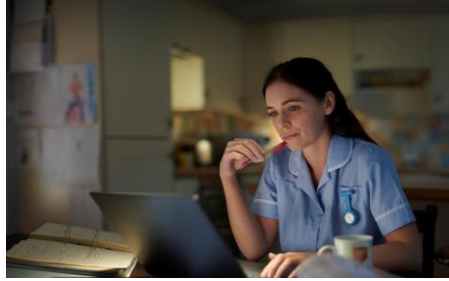
The AfC Pay Deal (2023) – Non-Pay Streams Nurse Career Progression

Aim: To improve career progression opportunities for NHS nurses, particularly for BAME and internationally recruited nurses, as evidence demonstrates they face additional barriers to develop and progress.



Our focus: Role of leadership, transparency of CPD funding, employment support and practice around nurse career progression for BAME nurses; maximise opportunities for wider application

The NHS nurse workforce issues



Stagnant careers

Nurses in bands 5/6 with unclear progression pathways. Lack of opportunities for promotion.



Retention

Variable turnover rates. Workload and demand high.



AfC Pay System

pay system in need of structural reform to keep pace with changing employment landscape



Inequitable progression

BAME and internationally recruited nurses face systemic barriers to advancement.



Job evaluation

Consistent implementation and up to date

Key considerations (enabling and blocking) for employers to make a meaningful difference in improving NHS nurse career progression outcomes

What the evidence tells us

- NHS employs 372,000 nurses with 44% working at band 5 (163,000).
- Nurses progress more slowly to Band 6 and above compared to other professions

BAME nurses are *less likely to*:

- feel progression is fair (*50.2% BAME vs 58.4% white progression perception gap*)
- be appointed or promoted (*white nurses are twice as likely to move from Band 5 to Band 6 than any other ethnic group*)

Data Sources:

Royal College of Nursing report 'Left Behind: a review of evidence on the career progression of NHS Nurses', December 2025,
NHS England staff survey 2025,
Royal College of Nursing report 'Left Behind: a review of evidence on the career progression of NHS Nurses', December 2025



Joint Recommendations (Agreed by Secretary of State, April 2025)

1. Promotion and encouragement from board level of the NHSE framework for line managers and other leadership measures such as career coaching.
2. Creation of learning and development committees in organisations (similar to Health and Safety committees).
3. Increase transparency and discussion at local level on how trust CPD funding is spent.
4. Provide six-month career reviews by suitably trained individuals to provide bespoke support to BAME nurses who can help signpost to suitable development and career progression opportunities, and support with application and interview preparation.
5. Promotion of short term (~6 month) secondments to enhance skills and experience of BAME nurses ahead of recruitment opportunities.
6. Increase communication and support for career progression of BAME nurses, working closely with national leads in NHSE.
7. Guidance for employers on how to minimise bias and share best practice on recruitment and selection processes.

NHS Employers role

- Lead the implementation of 7 recommendations agreed by Secretary of State (April 2025)
- Convene a task a finish group (TFG) to support the development of the work: March 2026 – Aug 2027 (employers, trade unions, professional expertise and national body leads)
- Develop and publish best practice examples
- Engage with nursing and workforce leaders in the NHS in England
- Measure impact



Task & Finish Group – staff side priorities to support implementation

- Enhancing learning and development representatives across regions and trusts.
- To provide support and development for learning & development reps to support implementation of the seven recommendations and support a move towards collaboration with NHS organisations that support career development.
- Align with EDI leads and nursing to ensure the message and actions to support BAME and international nurses find pathways for career development.
- To work closely with organisations to demonstrate transparency and alignment with CPD funding to ensure there is a basis of equity of opportunity and focus on diversity.

Learning and Development Committees

We'd like to understand the current landscape around the use of learning and development committees and how this works in practice.

Q) Do you have a forum which reviews and makes decisions about how education and training money is disseminated and prioritised across your organisation?

Q) Do you work with union colleagues or union learning reps around education and training funding plans?

Q) If you work with union colleagues or learning reps on decisions about education and training funding and plans, how do you do this? And are there positives you can briefly share?

Please share your response in the chat box.



Asks of CPOs and CNOs

1. Leadership and accountability

CPO and CNO commit to jointly lead/own work to remove racism and discriminatory practices from recruitment and career progression processes; and to improve transparency and staff confidence in how CPD funding is used. Ensure appropriate local governance is in place.

2. Data, policy and practice

Using workforce data, staff survey data, WRES data and staff feedback, review what your data tells you about career progression and development opportunities in your organisation at the moment. Are you confident your recruitment and progression practices are fair to all and free from discrimination?



Asks of CPOs and CNOs

3. Decision making

Review the clarity and transparency in decision making processes for CPD funding allocation and career development/progression opportunities.

4. Partnership working

Work with local staff side representatives in reviewing existing work on tackling racism in recruitment and career progression. What's working, what isn't. Consider new approaches if required, drawing on evidence and learning from within your organisation and the wider NHS.

Find out if you have a local TU learning representative and if not, explore with your existing local reps how you can work closer together in this field. Be clear on expected standards of behaviour and conduct from all staff.



Asks of CPOs and CNOs

5. Measuring and sharing impact:

Agree a joint approach (management / staff side representatives) to tracking progress on career progression for nurses, that can also be used for the wider workforce, using local workforce data, staff survey, WRES data and feedback. Linking to first theme, be clear where this is reported.

Agree how the work and its progress is shared and communicated within your organisation and how you will seek advocacy and engagement to accelerate progress.

Consider sharing your work with the NHS Employers team so we can share it with others via our website and networking events.



Antiracist good employment practice in action: North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust



Victoria Woodjetts
Organisation Development
Business Partner



Katie Spring
People Development
Practitioner



Paula Woods
Chief People Officer



Ali Kennah
Chief Nurse and Director of Infection
Prevention and Control



North Cheshire and Mersey
NHS Foundation Trust

Your Future Your Way

Nurse career progression: good and fair employment practice | NHS Employers

July 2026



History of Your Future Your Way

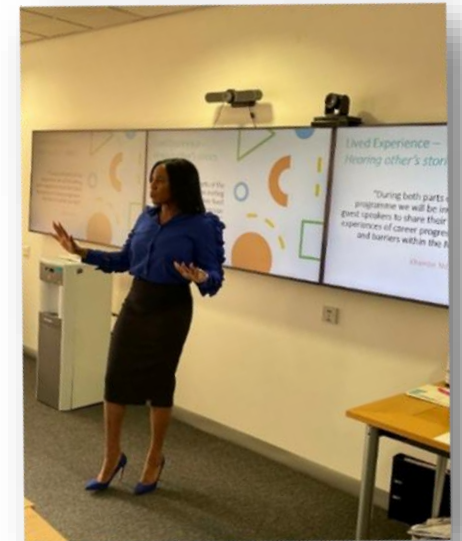
The former Chief Nurse (Kimberley Salmon-Jamieson*) and the Organisational Development (OD) team lead (Ruth Heggie*) in 2022 recognised that our Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional (AHP) workforce diversity was not reflected in senior leadership.

Your Future Your Way develops leadership, reflection and sponsorship for Black and minority ethnic colleagues, while upskilling senior leaders to support band 5 and 6 staff and advance equity.

The programme ran in two parts and commenced in October 2022, supported by external speakers/experts who talked about their lived experience, barriers they overcame, racism and discrimination.

- 3 cohorts have the programme have taken place
- 43 Seniors leaders engaged in Part A
- 54 colleagues have engaged with Part B
- 26 different departments have attended Part B

*at the time of launch



Structure of the programme

The programme comprises two integrated components:

Part A: Senior Leadership Development and Sponsorship

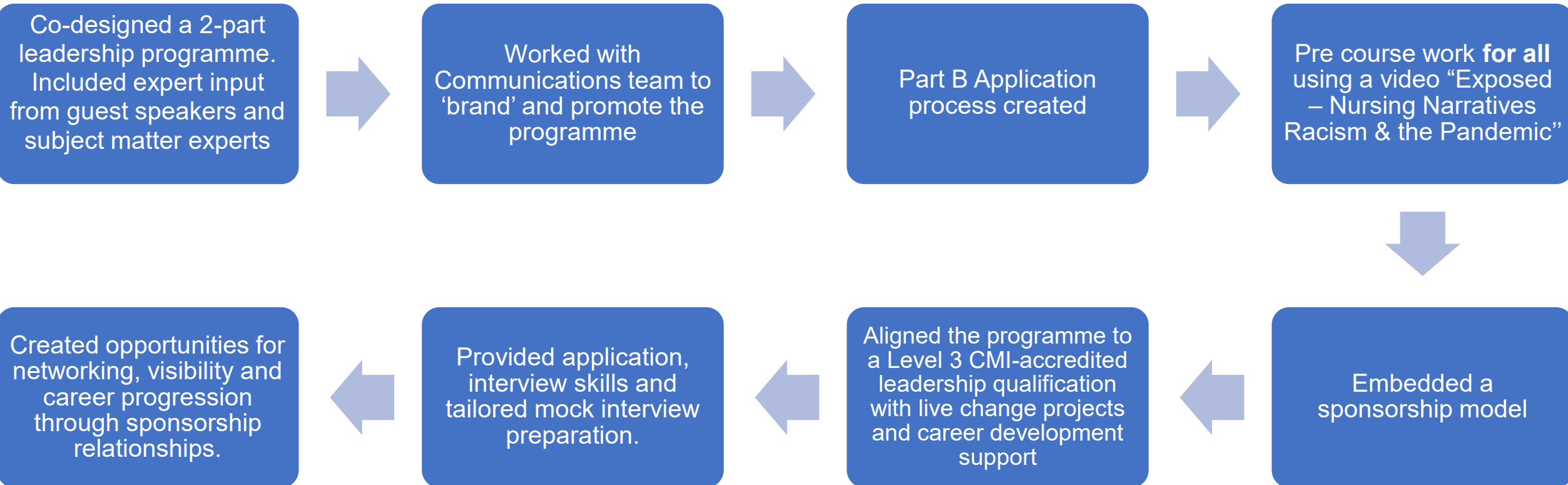
- Explore leadership impact and strengthen inclusive leadership
- Build understanding of barriers faced by Black and Minority Ethnic colleagues
- Commit to active sponsorship to champion equity

Part B: Leadership Development and Career Progression Pathway

- Complete a structured leadership programme and change project
- Build confidence, capability and career progression pathways
- Strengthen networks to support ongoing development



Implementation of YFYW



Key Components of Your Future Your Way

- Chief Nurse and Chief People Officer support
- Sponsorship
- National guest speakers and subject matter experts
- 2 parts
- Align with Level 3 CMI qualification
- Change project
- Interview and Application skills
- Poster and presentation
- Joint celebration



Key Components of Your Future Your Way

Part A

- || **Session 1:** Introduction to the programme including your role as a sponsor
- || **Session 2:** Self as a Leader
- || **Session 3:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- || **Session 4:** Coaching and Supportive Conversations

For NCM senior nurses, midwives and AHP colleagues working as lead nurses, matrons and ward/department managers/heads.

Part B

- || **Session 1:** Introduction to the programme (with sponsors)
- || **Session 2:** Introduction to Leadership & shared stories
- || **Session 3:** Leading Change
- || **Session 4:** Leadership Project
- || **Session 5:** Quality Improvement
- || **Session 6:** Working in Teams
- || **Session 7:** Finance, Governance & Business Planning
- || **Session 8:** Writing and Presentations
- || **Session 9:** Project Presentations
- || **Session 10:** Interview Preparation
- || **Session 11:** Mock Interviews and Coaching
- || **Session 12:** Self Awareness and Evaluation
- || **Celebration Event**

Throughout the programme, lived experience will be embedded to enable continuous learning

Barriers and Mitigations

- Sponsor capacity and engagement – addressed through early planning, executive sponsorship and structured support for sponsors
- Funding – delivered internally by the organisation development and subject matter experts. CMI accreditation incurred costs for registration and marking but could be optional.
- Operational pressures – mitigated by engaging line managers early, setting clear expectations and aligning attendance with programme requirements
- Academic confidence – supported through study skills teaching, OD tutor support and protected learning time
- Personal pressures – managed with flexible support, accessible materials and tailored adjustments to maintain engagement



Impact

- 43 senior leaders have supported the career development of junior colleagues by acting as a sponsor
- 54 colleagues have achieved a Level 3 CMI accreditation of those 49 are nurses.
- 26 different departments have attended Part B of the programme
- 54 Service Improvement projects have been implemented at the Trust
- 18 Guest speakers/knowledge experts have supported the programme
- Promotions and side moves:
 - 12 promotions
 - 3 side moves
- Secondments:
 - 3 to Infection Prevention Control Team
 - 2 resulting in permanent roles within the team.



Impact

Between 2022 and 2025, the percentage of staff responses from ethnic backgrounds selecting ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ across survey questions rose by:

24b There are opportunities for me to develop my career in this organisation	4.63%
24d I feel supported to develop my potential	2.28%
24e I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to	4.63%



Video: Part B Delegate Experience



A word from Paula Woods

Chief People Officer, North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust

Future plans

- Planning cohort 4
- Updated Level 3 CMI qualification – First Line Management and Leadership, module: Approaches to Managing and Leading People and Teams
- Increased guided learning hours and a hybrid delivery approach
- Programme will align with national frameworks where appropriate

Aspiration and ambition for the organisation

- We will continue to support this Programme and those involved and engaged in it
- I will personally pick up a Sponsor role as offered by the Programme
- We will continue to celebrate the success of the Programme along with the achievements of its participants



Sponsor story – Ali Kennah

Chief Nurse and Director of Infection Prevention and Control, North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust

Personal impact:

- Challenged assumptions about overseas workforce capability and contribution
- Deeper appreciation of the richness, bravery and experience individuals bring
- Strengthened commitment to diversity as a strategic strength

Organisational impact:

- Positive senior leadership endorsement and visible impact
- Improved support for Black, Minority Ethnic staff groups through clearer signposting and connections
- Stronger organisational relationships supporting inclusion and retention

Impact on those in the sponsorship relationship:

- Increased insight into board decision making and organisational complexity
- Greater understanding of how the organisation operates and makes decisions
- Enhanced access to networks and senior leadership visibility
- Improved confidence and sense of belonging within the organisation



Panel Q&A



Victoria Woodjetts

Organisation Development Business
Partner, North Cheshire and Mersey
NHS Foundation Trust



**Andrew
McMenemy**

Executive Chief People Officer,
Essex Partnership University NHS
Foundation Trust



Gifty Markey

Associate CNO for Mental Health,
Learning Disability and
Neurodiversity at North Bristol NHS
Trust and Joint Chair of NHS
England's Chief Nursing Officer and
Chief Medical Officer BME Strategic
Advisory Group



Ali Kennah

Chief Nurse and Director of
Infection Prevention and Control,
North Cheshire and Mersey NHS
Foundation Trust



Brian Morton

Associate Director of Employment
Relations, Royal College of Nursing

Please submit questions via the Q&A function

Next steps

Further CPO / CNO engagement

- **November webinar** – to highlight links with key policy drivers and good practice examples.
- **February webinar** – to coincide with Race Equality Week 2026 (2 – 8 Feb)
#ChangeNeedsAllofUs and showcase anti-racist good employment practice examples.
- **Developing online career progression hub** on the NHS Employers website (collate guidance, advice and good practice)

New resources to support you

- **Case study 1 - Using CPD funds equitably for fairer access to development**
Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
- **Case study 2 - Breaking down barriers to career progression**
North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust
- **Five asks of CPOs / CNOs to support implementation**

If you are leading activity to support your nurses, particularly BAME nurses, to progress and thrive in the NHS, please let us know and get in touch at:

educationandreform@nhsemployers.org

Thank you!

Please take a minute to complete our short evaluation survey which will pop up when the webinar closes.