

Meeting title:	Trust Board Trust Board Paper C					
Date of the meeting:	8 th October 2026					
Title:	Black History Month 2026 and Staff Story					
Report presented by:	Clare Teeney, Chief People Officer					
Report written by:	Sandy Zavery, Head of EDI					
Action – this paper is for:	Decision/Approval		Assurance	x	Update	
Where this report has been discussed previously						

To your knowledge, does the report provide assurance or mitigate any significant risks? If yes, please detail which	
The report provides assurance that UHL is actively promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through a coordinated Black History Month 2026 programme aligned to the national theme, "Honouring Our Communities", with a focus on recognising the contributions, experiences and achievements of Black colleagues and communities.	
Impact assessment	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: The programme supports UHL's by increasing the visibility of Black colleagues, celebrating contributions and achievements, promoting inclusion and belonging, and providing opportunities for learning and engagement across the Trust.	
Financial: Delivery of Black History Month activities is minimal and will be managed through existing budgets and resources.	
Acronyms used: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Black History Month (BHM).	
Alert, Assure, Advise	Key Summary
Alert	The Board is alerted to: low promotion, awareness and engagement may limit the impact of inclusion activities.
Assurance	The Board can be assured that: Black History Month 2026 supports UHL's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by promoting recognition, education, staff engagement and belonging.
Advise	The Board is asked to: support the delivery of Black History Month 2026 and promote active participation across the Trust to maximise its impact and contribution to UHL's EDI objectives.

1. Purpose of the Report

Black History Month 2026 provides an important opportunity to reflect on, recognise and celebrate the contribution of Black people to Britain's past, present and future. Taking place throughout October, it encourages communities, schools, public services and other organisations to promote greater visibility, understanding and recognition of Black history and lived experience.

The national theme for 2026, "**Honouring Our Communities**," focuses on recognising the individuals whose everyday contributions shape, support and sustain Black communities across the United Kingdom.

2. Executive Summary

The 2026 theme recognises that communities are defined not simply by geography, but by the people who create connection, provide support and foster a sense of belonging. It highlights the contributions of individuals such as volunteers, teachers, nurses, carers and community leaders, whose work can have a significant impact but may not always receive formal recognition.

Black communities have played a central role in Britain's social, cultural and civil development. From the early Black presence in Britain and the Windrush generation to the contributions being made today, community has remained an important source of resilience, progress and identity. Black History Month 2026 seeks to make these contributions more visible and encourages organisations to consider whose work is valued, whose stories are shared and whose contribution may previously have been overlooked.

For UHL, Black History Month provides an opportunity to recognise the contribution of Black colleagues across the Trust and to create space for staff voices, experiences and achievements to be heard. Our activities will support meaningful engagement, education and reflection, while reinforcing the importance of inclusion, belonging and equitable staff experience.

The month also provides an opportunity to acknowledge the diversity of Black communities. There is no single Black British experience; instead, there are many communities, identities, experiences and journeys. Our approach reflects the diversity of staff engagement and inclusivity through authentic lived experience.

3. Staff Story

Black History Month Story Summary: Mrs Ezinne Joy Ezeala, Consultant Pharmacist, Oncology and Cancer Trials

Mrs Ezinne Joy Ezeala's story is one of resilience, leadership, and the power of representation. Inspired by the strength of her grandmothers, who overcame significant barriers despite having no formal education, and by her mother, who became a pioneering nurse, midwife and public health lecturer, Ezinne's journey reflects the importance of perseverance and aspiration.

After moving from Nigeria to the UK in 2004, Ezinne studied Pharmacy in Leicester and qualified in 2011. She began her NHS career as a rotational pharmacist and progressed into senior leadership roles within oncology pharmacy services. While balancing a demanding career with raising a young family, she faced significant challenges, including leading complex service improvements and implementing electronic chemotherapy prescribing systems.

At a pivotal point in her career, Ezinne recognised the need for support and personal development. Through self-reflection, leadership training, time spent strengthening her support network, and a renewed belief in her abilities, she developed greater resilience and confidence. These experiences helped her progress into increasingly influential roles, including leading cancer services, working nationally with NHS England, establishing new services, and mentoring healthcare professionals.

Now working at UHL, Ezinne is passionate about community engagement, supporting women's health education, inspiring young people to pursue NHS careers, and contributing through her local church. Reflecting on Black History Month, she highlights the importance of representation within the NHS and the impact of supportive leaders who recognise potential and invest in others.

Her message is one of encouragement: pursue your ambitions with confidence, value the strength that comes from diversity, and remember that there are people willing to support, guide and champion your success (please view updates from staff in Appendix A).

4. EDI Programme of Awareness

UHL will be delivering a diverse programme of activities throughout October to celebrate Black History Month, recognising and valuing the significant contributions made by colleagues from Black, Asian and other ethnically diverse backgrounds across our Trust and communities. These activities provide an opportunity to celebrate heritage, share experiences, raise awareness and promote inclusion for all.

Please see Appendix B for the full programme of events and activities.

5. Conclusion

Black History Month 2026 offers UHL an opportunity to celebrate the people whose everyday contributions strengthen the organisation and the wider communities it serves. By embracing the theme "**Honouring Our Communities**," the Trust can increase visibility, promote understanding and recognise contributions that may otherwise remain unseen.

The programme provides a platform for staff stories, celebration, learning and reflection, while demonstrating that the recognition of Black history, achievement and lived experience is integral to UHL's continuing commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

6. Recommendation

We ask that Trust Board approve and support the delivery of a Trust-wide Black History Month 2026 programme aligned to the national theme, "**Honouring Our Communities**," celebrating the contributions, experiences and achievements of Black colleagues and communities.

Appendix A –

A story for Black History Month - Mrs Ezinne Joy Ezeala, Consultant Pharmacist- Oncology and Cancer Trials

Introduction- My Roots

Black history month is a perfect time to reflect on who I am and the footsteps before me. I am a daughter, a wife and mother. Both of my grandmothers were widowed early, neither received any formal education or inheritance. They however, remained generous, kind, pillars within their communities. Theirs was where every child knew they would be fed; every woman knew she would get good counsel. My mother was the first girl child to go to school in her family. She went on to become a celebrated nurse/midwife working in three different healthcare systems, and even becoming a public health lecturer.

The Journey- Nigeria to the UK

I moved to the UK in 2004, went to college in Manchester and studied Pharmacy here in Leicester 2006 -2010. I qualified in 2011 following my pre-registration training. Despite the prevailing notion that one could not get into hospital pharmacy, I secured my first job as a rotational pharmacist in Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Trust in 2011. By 2016, I was finishing maternity leave for my second child and applying to become a pharmacy service lead. This first lead role was challenging. I was managing an oncology service that was bursting at the seams with activity. I was training new staff, influencing, negotiating, reporting to leadership and doing my best to stabilise the service. I was leading on a difficult project- a move from paper to electronic chemotherapy prescribing systems. I had two young children, in full time work, with much to learn and very little time.

Finding Light When the Path Narrows

I reached a critical point in this role when I had to make a decision. Key voices of wisdom reminded me that stepping down could mean giving up on my aspirations. I was running away from leadership. I listened, I made some changes.

1. I acknowledged that I was struggling; therefore, I took some time off. I leaned into my support network in that time.
2. I decided to stay in my post...until I found a better job
3. I decided to get leadership training and I paid out of pocket
4. I reframed work. I affirmed myself. I listened more to the positive voices.

The changes worked and I became more resilient. I have since lead another chemotherapy service, worked at regional /national level as an NHSE cancer commissioning pharmacist, set up new services and trained many new staff. I have added a few more strategies to my repertoire too. I know to support the whole person. I accept, celebrate and give thanks for others; our differences and strengths. I am quietly confident about the future.

Reflections on Representation, Role models and Supportive Leadership

I relocated to Leicester with my husband and three children, to work at UHL. I am engaged in various community projects. I speak at women's events about female cancers; empowering them for self- advocacy. I have shared my journey in schools, inspiring young children to pursue NHS careers. I am active in my local church, in the kids and ministry teams. Reflecting on black history month, I am reminded of the importance of representation within the NHS. I am very fortunate to have experienced supportive leaders from all backgrounds. Leaders that have said "yes", believed

and invested in me. I celebrate you all. This month provides us a great opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of numerous staff of black heritage. I encourage us all to pursue our aspirations with confidence, knowing that there are many, willing to come alongside us, to support, guide and promote.

Staff Story Update

Eric Nartey, Nurse

As a one-year follow-up to Eric's original Black History Month feature and his inspiring staff story shared with Trust Board, Eric has continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to both leadership and professional development. Since telling his story, he was elected Secretary of his local Royal College of Nursing (RCN) branch in November 2025, successfully completed the Leading an Empowered Organisation programme in December 2025, and, in April 2026, achieved qualification as a Nursing Practice Supervisor and Practice Assessor.

These accomplishments have further strengthened his leadership capabilities and enhanced his ability to support, mentor and develop colleagues within clinical practice, while contributing to the delivery of high-quality patient care.

Joanna Bernard, Nurse

In 2023/2024, Joanna Bernard shared her personal story with colleagues as part of our Black History Month celebrations. Two years on, Joanna provides an update on her journey, highlighting her experiences, growth, and achievements since first sharing her story.

Since sharing my story with the committee, I continue to work as a Sister within UHL. I have remained committed to delivering high-quality patient care, supporting staff development, and leading my team to provide the best possible outcomes for our patients.

One of my key achievements has been leading a project called "We Are Nurses First- Back to Our Roots", which was designed to reawaken the passion and purpose that inspired us to enter the nursing profession. The project encouraged both junior and senior nurses to reflect on their impact, continue striving for excellence, and recognise the value they bring to patient care every day. Through this work, we also identified areas where additional nursing resources were needed to further improve the quality of care provided. I am pleased that the case for additional nursing support was approved, helping to strengthen our workforce and enhance patient care. I continue to be passionate about empowering nurses, promoting professional growth, and creating a positive and supportive culture within the emergency department.

Appendix B





University Hospitals
of Leicester
NHS Trust

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

Celebrating Stories, Heritage and Inclusion

Honouring Our Communities ♥





INFORMATION STANDS

	8 October	Leicester General Hospital (LGH)
	12 October	Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI)
	29 October	Glenfield Hospital (GH)



PHARMACY EDI DROP-IN SESSIONS

	8 October	LGH
	12 October	LRI
	29 October	GH



GUEST SPEAKER EVENT

Vernal Scott

 **27 October 2026**

Vernal Scott will be joining the joint REACH and Internationally Educated Colleagues (IEC) Network meeting as our guest speaker.



Listening to stories.



Learning from each other.



Building an inclusive future.

One team ♥ Shared values ♥ Better care ♥ Together

uhl-tr.nhs.uk