Honouring Our Communities

Celebrating achievement, challenging inequality, and creating lasting change

31 OCTOBER 2026

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY UK

www.equalityanddiversity.co.uk

Foreword

October has been as inspiring as it has been busy!

Black History Month is always an important time for Equality and Diversity UK (EDUK), but this year has been particularly meaningful.

Under the theme **Honouring Our Communities**, we have celebrated Black history and achievement, amplified underrepresented voices, challenged inequalities, and brought people together to explore how we can make our communities, organisations, and services more inclusive.

From authoring two educational books and hosting our Black History Month conference to championing ethnically diverse school governors and marking seven years of our Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club, October has offered many opportunities to learn, reflect and act.

We have also launched a five-week programme using Me and White Supremacy to encourage honest reflection and journalling about White silence, White fragility, and everyday anti-racist practice, while beginning the process of establishing an Anti-Racism Panel for Bury.

One of the highlights was our conference, *Courageous Conversations About Race and Neurodiversity*, held on 21 October 2026. Thirteen participants came together to share experiences, challenge assumptions, and explore practical solutions to the barriers experienced by ethnically diverse neurodivergent people.

What made the day particularly special was not simply the quality of the conversations, but the determination to continue them. The proposal to establish **HOPE – Honouring Our Perspectives Equitably** offers an exciting opportunity to turn those conversations into ongoing professional collaboration.

For EDUK, Black History Month has never been about ticking a box or celebrating diversity for just 31 days.

It is about recognising the past, understanding the present and taking responsibility for creating a fairer future.

Because awareness is important, but action is what creates change.

Executive Summary: Our October at a Glance

Black History Month 2026 has provided EDUK with valuable opportunities to strengthen anti-racist education, promote community contributions, encourage professional collaboration, and champion inclusive leadership.

Highlights of the month

- **Two educational books authored:** *Honouring Our Communities – Greater Manchester: Primary Schools Edition* and *Brilliance Unhidden: An Easy Read Pocketbook for Black History Month 2026*.
- **Black History Month Conference:** Thirteen participants attended *Courageous Conversations About Race and Neurodiversity* on 21 October 2026.
- **HOPE Professional Network:** A proposal emerged for *Honouring Our Perspectives Equitably*, bringing professionals together to share learning and improve inclusive practice.
- **Ethnically Diverse School Governors:** Developed a national visibility and networking initiative recognising the contribution of governors from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- **Seven Years of Anti-Racism Learning:** Celebrated the continuing work of EDUK's Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club.
- **Leadership and Accountability:** Continued connecting equality, education, governance, neurodiversity, and racial justice through our wider professional activities.
- **Five-week anti-racism reflection programme:** Running a structured Me and White Supremacy reading and journalling programme exploring White silence, White fragility, lived experiences, and everyday responsibility to challenge racism.
- **Anti-Racism Panel for Bury:** Began the process of establishing a local panel to strengthen community voice, accountability, and practical anti-racist action.

The central message running throughout October has been clear:

Black history matters every day, and anti-racism must be more than an annual conversation.

1. Honouring Our Communities

Honouring Our Communities has shaped our work by recognising both well-known Black historical figures and the everyday contributions of community leaders, educators, parents, carers, activists, and volunteers.

For EDUK, honouring our communities means recognising not only the famous names found in history books but also the people whose contributions are too often overlooked: community leaders, educators, parents, carers, activists, professionals, volunteers, and everyday people who have made a difference.

Black history is not separate from British history. It is an integral part of the story of our communities, institutions, industries, schools, and society.

Our work throughout October has sought to challenge these omissions, celebrate achievement and encourage people to consider whose voices are represented, whose stories are told and whose experiences remain overlooked.

It means recognising the contributions being made today, creating opportunities for future generations, and ensuring that everyone has a genuine sense of belonging.

Black history is British history. It belongs in our classrooms, workplaces, and communities throughout the year.

2. Two Books, One Mission: Making Black History Accessible to Everyone

One of EDUK's most substantial achievements for Black History Month 2026 has been the **authoring and development of two educational books**.

Both publications reflect our commitment to making equality education accessible, engaging, and relevant to different audiences.

Honouring Our Communities – Greater Manchester: Primary Schools Edition

Our first book was developed to help primary school children explore Black history through the people, places, achievements, and communities that have helped shape Greater Manchester.

Rather than concentrating solely on nationally recognised historical figures, the book encourages children to discover the contributions of people within their own communities.

It explores history, identity, equality, representation and belonging, helping young readers recognise that people from diverse backgrounds have contributed to the society in which they live.

The book encourages children to reflect on important questions:

- Who has helped shape our communities?
- Whose achievements do we celebrate?
- Why is representation important?
- What does fairness mean?
- How can we challenge stereotypes?
- What can each of us do to make our communities more inclusive?

It also supports teachers in making connections between Black history and wider areas of learning, including citizenship, geography, literacy, careers, and personal development.

A particularly important message is that children need to see diversity reflected not only in the people they learn about but also in those who lead, teach, and influence their communities.

EDUK has made the books available free of charge to support wider access to inclusive educational resources.

Our aim is to help children recognise that their history matters, their identity matters, and their contribution to the future matters.

Brilliance Unhidden: An Easy Read Pocketbook for Black History Month 2026

Our second publication, *Brilliance Unhidden*, explores the intersection of race and neurodiversity.

With the message:

Different minds. Real barriers. Extraordinary impact.

The book highlights the importance of recognising the strengths, abilities and contributions of ethnically diverse neurodivergent people while also addressing the barriers they may experience.

The Easy Read format was developed to make important information more accessible, reflecting our belief that equality education should be inclusive in both its content and presentation.

The publication also encourages organisations to examine their practices, including recruitment, progression, communication, reasonable adjustments, access to support and organisational accountability.

This book complements our October conference, providing a resource to support continued learning about race, neurodiversity, and inclusive practice.

Why these books matter

Together, these books make local Black history and the intersection of race and neurodiversity more accessible to different audiences, supporting learning beyond October.

Two books. Different audiences. One shared commitment to equality, representation, and meaningful change.

3. Black History Month Conference 2026

Courageous Conversations About Race and Neurodiversity

Wednesday 21 October 2026 | Manchester

One of the most significant achievements of October was our Black History Month conference, bringing together 13 participants for a day of learning, reflection, lived experience, and practical solution-building.

Our focus was on an issue that receives far too little attention: the experiences of ethnically diverse neurodivergent people.

We wanted to explore how race, ethnicity, culture and neurodivergence can intersect, creating additional barriers to accessing appropriate recognition, advice, guidance, education, employment, services, and support.

Listening to lived experience

The conference combined discussions about neurodiversity and intersecting inequalities, courageous conversations, and a Human Library approach to listening to lived experience.

Participants reflected on the importance of understanding the whole person rather than making assumptions based on ethnicity, behaviour, communication style or neurodivergence.

The discussions highlighted how stereotypes and negative labels can lead to people's needs being misunderstood or overlooked.

We explored the importance of culturally responsive communication, individualised reasonable adjustments and ensuring that people have genuine opportunities to influence decisions affecting their lives.

One of the strongest messages from the day was that data can help identify patterns of inequality, but people's lived experiences explain what those patterns actually mean.

Five key messages from our conference

1. See the whole person: People's experiences are shaped by different and intersecting aspects of identity. We must avoid assumptions and understand individual circumstances.

2. Make communication accessible: Plain language, alternative formats, processing time, and culturally responsive approaches can make a significant difference.

3. Use evidence responsibly: Organisations need reliable information to identify inequalities but must not lose sight of the people behind the statistics.

4. Move from representation to shared influence: People with lived experience should have meaningful opportunities to shape services, policies, and decisions.

5. Turn allyship into action: Challenging inequalities requires people to use their influence, question assumptions and take responsibility for improving practice.

Stop, Start, Continue, Change: Participants also explored practical actions through a Stop, Start, Continue, Change approach.

STOP: Using stereotypes, negative labels, tokenistic consultation, and inflexible approaches that fail to recognise individual needs.

START: Listening more carefully, asking what support people need, co-designing services and taking responsibility for improvements.

CONTINUE: Sharing learning, listening to lived experience, building professional relationships and challenging inequalities.

CHANGE: Inaccessible communication, exclusionary policies, unsuitable referral pathways, and organisational practices that prevent meaningful participation.

These reflections provide a practical starting point for making services more equitable, accessible, and inclusive.

And perhaps most importantly, participants wanted to keep the conversations going.

4. From Conversations to HOPE

Honouring Our Perspectives Equitably

One of the most encouraging outcomes of our conference was the enthusiasm for establishing an ongoing professional network.

From these conversations came the proposal for **HOPE – Honouring Our Perspectives Equitably**.

HOPE is intended to bring together professionals working across education, health, employment, public services, and community organisations.

The proposed network would provide opportunities to exchange good practice, discuss challenges, access professional learning, and improve the experiences of ethnically diverse neurodivergent people.

It would also seek to ensure that lived experience remains central to discussions about service design and improvement.

What happens next?

EDUK will support interested participants to explore the establishment of HOPE, agree priorities, and develop arrangements for future meetings.

The initial proposal includes meeting every two months, sharing resources and learning, identifying practical actions, and reviewing progress.

We are particularly excited about the opportunity to create a supportive professional community where people can ask questions, challenge assumptions, and work together to improve services.

Our ambition is simple: turn courageous conversations into meaningful, lasting improvements.

5. Honouring Ethnically Diverse School Governors

If You See It, You Can Be It

Another important part of our Black History Month work has been recognising and celebrating the contributions of school governors from ethnically diverse backgrounds. School governors play a vital role in shaping the strategic direction of schools, supporting and challenging school leaders and helping to ensure that every child receives the best possible education.

Yet the diversity of our school communities is not always reflected in the adults holding positions of leadership and responsibility.

Drawing on more than 19 years of experience as a school governor and Chair of Governors, we have been developing a national social media initiative to connect and celebrate governors from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

The aim is to create a space where governors can share their lived experiences, connect with others, celebrate their contributions, and increase visibility.

Why does representation matter?

Children benefit from seeing people who reflect their identities and communities in positions of leadership.

Visible diversity helps challenge stereotypes, broaden aspirations and demonstrate that leadership opportunities should be open to everyone.

Our Black History Month infographic highlighted differences between the ethnic diversity of school pupils, teachers, headteachers and governors.

It also drew attention to an important data gap: the Department for Education does not hold comprehensive national ethnicity data on school governors.

Without reliable information, it becomes more difficult to understand representation and measure progress.

Representation is not simply about numbers. It is about ensuring that different perspectives, experiences, and voices contribute meaningfully to decisions.

Different experiences. Stronger decisions. Fairer schools.

6. Seven Years of Anti-Racist Learning

6. Reading, Reflecting and Taking Action

October also marks seven years of our Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club.

What began as a commitment to learning and discussing racism has developed into an ongoing opportunity to explore challenging issues, question assumptions and encourage meaningful change.

Over the years, the book club has provided a space to engage with writing about race, identity, history, inequality, privilege, and social justice.

In the lead-up to Black History Month, we created promotional materials drawing on non-fiction writing about race, history, identity, and empire.

Our discussion of *Empireland* by Sathnam Sanghera invited participants to reflect on how Britain's imperial past continues to influence contemporary society, and to share what the reading meant to them personally and professionally.

Understanding racism also means examining the historical, institutional, and structural forces that continue to shape inequality.

From reading to doing

It is about asking what we have learnt, how that learning challenges us and what we will do with it.

But learning becomes particularly powerful when it changes how we behave, make decisions and challenge unfairness.

Seven years of learning, reflection, and courageous conversations – and the journey continues.

7. Five Weeks of Reflection: Me and White Supremacy

From reading to journalling, accountability, and action

Alongside our ongoing Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club, we are running a five-week programme exploring Me and White Supremacy by Layla F. Saad. The programme invites members to engage with the book, reflect honestly on its language and ideas, and use personal journalling to examine how racism operates in everyday life and practice.

Our discussions include concepts such as White silence and White fragility. We are asking not only what these terms mean, but when silence, defensiveness or inaction may allow racism to continue in our workplaces, communities, relationships, and institutions.

For ethnically diverse members, the group creates space to reflect on lived experiences, the impact of racism and the emotional labour of navigating situations in which racism is minimised or left unchallenged. For White members, the emphasis is on taking responsibility: recognising when they remain silent, listening without becoming defensive, challenging racism when it occurs and making changes in their own behaviour.

Journalling encourages participants to consider difficult questions: When have I stayed silent? What prevented me from speaking up? Whose experiences have I overlooked? How can I respond differently next time? The purpose is not to produce perfect answers, but to develop greater awareness, accountability, and the confidence to act.

Our message is clear: White silence must not be the comfortable option, and the responsibility for challenging racism must not fall solely on those who experience it.

8. Leadership, Accountability and Racial Justice

Our work on racial equality also extends into leadership, governance, and public accountability.

Alongside EDUK's Black History Month activities, we continued developing connections between anti-racist education and practical leadership through work involving the Equality, Women and Skills Expert Group, school governance, and Bury's Police Independent Advisory Group.

These areas of work provide opportunities to challenge inequalities in decision-making, representation, education, and public services.

We have also been exploring the intersection of race and neurodivergence, recognising that people's experiences of inequality cannot always be understood through a single characteristic.

A person's experience of accessing education, employment, healthcare, or public services may be shaped by several overlapping factors, including race, ethnicity, disability, neurodivergence, gender, culture, and socio-economic circumstances.

Leadership must be accountable

Inclusive leadership requires more than positive statements and commitments.

It means examining how decisions are made, whose voices are heard, whether policies create unintended barriers and whether people experience fair and equitable outcomes.

Our wider aim is to encourage organisations to move beyond statements of commitment and demonstrate how their decisions, policies and practices create fairer outcomes.

9. Towards an Anti-Racism Panel for Bury

Building local accountability and opportunities for change

During October, we also began the process of establishing an Anti-Racism Panel for Bury. This is an important step towards creating a local forum in which racism and racial inequalities can be discussed openly, experiences can be heard and constructive action can be developed.

The proposed panel offers an opportunity to bring lived experience, community perspectives, and organisational responsibility into closer conversation. Its purpose and membership will need to be developed collaboratively so that it is representative, accessible, and able to influence meaningful change.

At this stage, the work is at the establishment phase. The next steps include clarifying the panel's remit, considering membership and governance, identifying how concerns and recommendations could be raised, and agreeing how progress would be reviewed.

The aim is not simply to create another discussion forum. It is to work towards a credible, accountable approach that can help identify barriers, challenge racism and support lasting improvements across Bury.

This initiative reflects the same principle that has guided our Black History Month work: listen to people, recognise inequality, share responsibility, and turn conversations into action.

10. From Learning to Action

Awareness alone does not create equality.

Books, conferences, and inspiring messages can build understanding. Change begins when we apply that learning to our decisions, policies, and behaviour.

But lasting change requires us to apply what we have learnt. For employers, this might mean examining recruitment, progression, and disciplinary processes for racial inequalities.

For schools, it might mean reviewing how Black history is represented across the curriculum, how racist incidents are addressed and whether Black pupils and families feel heard.

For healthcare and public services, it might mean reviewing how ethnicity, culture and neurodivergence affect access to assessment, advice, support, and reasonable adjustments.

For governors and leaders, it might mean asking whose voices are missing from decision-making and what can be done to improve representation.

For individuals, it might mean challenging racist language, questioning stereotypes, listening to experiences different from our own and refusing to remain silent when discrimination occurs.

A question for everyone

What have you learnt during Black History Month, and what will you do differently as a result?

Because small actions, sustained over time and supported by organisational change, can contribute to lasting progress.

11. Our October Impact: People, Perspectives and Possibilities

Looking back across October, several important achievements and outcomes stand out.

Creating accessible educational resources
The authoring of two Black History Month books has expanded EDUK's collection of resources supporting inclusive education, representation, racial equality, and neurodiversity awareness.

Bringing people together
Our conference created opportunities for 13 participants to share experiences, listen to different perspectives, and identify practical solutions.

Building connections for the future
The proposed HOPE network provides an opportunity to sustain professional collaboration and translate learning into improvements.

Championing representation
Our school-governor initiative has highlighted the importance of ethnically diverse leadership and the need for greater visibility and reliable representation data.

Supporting anti-racist learning
Seven years of our Anti-Racism Leadership Book Club demonstrate the importance of sustained engagement rather than one-off awareness activities.

Turning discussion into action
Our conference discussions produced clear themes and suggested actions for improving communication, accessibility, professional practice, and organisational accountability.

Deepening personal reflection and accountability
Our five-week Me and White Supremacy programme provides a structured space for reading, journalling, and exploring how White silence, defensiveness and everyday decisions affect ethnically diverse people and the responsibility of White allies to act.

Developing local anti-racist accountability Beginning the establishment process for an Anti-Racism Panel for Bury creates a potential route for stronger community involvement and local accountability. Its impact will need to be assessed as the panel develops. These are meaningful steps, not yet evidence of long-term outcomes. We will judge progress by what changes in practice, whose experiences improve and how effectively commitments are followed through.

Our aim is not simply to reach people with information, but to encourage learning that leads to change.

12. Looking Beyond October

As October draws to a close, we want to thank everyone who has engaged with our work, supported our learning activities, participated in conversations or taken time to reflect on what racial equality means in practice. Our commitment remains to make equality, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism accessible, relevant, and actionable.

Next, we aim to develop HOPE with interested participants, progress the Bury Anti-Racism Panel, support ethnically diverse school governors and sustain accessible anti-racist learning.

We will continue the five-week reading and journalling programme, encourage participants to act on their reflections and establish clear next steps and review points for both emerging networks.

Black History Month may be ending, but our commitment to racial justice continues throughout the year.

Thank You for Being Part of Our October

Whether you attended our conference, contributed to discussions, engaged with our educational resources, supported our initiatives, or simply took time to reflect on the importance of racial equality, thank you.

We would love to hear what Black History Month has meant to you.

What have you learnt? What has challenged your thinking? And what action will you take next?

Together we learn. Together we challenge. Together we change.

Equality and Diversity UK (EDUK)

Honouring Our Communities – Black History Month 2026

www.equalityanddiversity.co.uk

You can view images of the conference on our website:

www.eduk.uk/flip/bhm-conference-2026

HONOURING THE PAST
INSPIRING THE FUTURE
ACTING TODAY

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026
CONFERENCE – FEEDBACK

A CELEBRATION OF OUR PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR POTENTIAS

OVERALL IMPRESSION

★★★★★

EXCELLENT

WHAT PEOPLE SAID

- "Inspiring and powerful."
- "Informative and engaging."
- "A brilliant event – so well organised."
- "It gave me a real sense of pride and belonging."
- "Important conversations that need to continue."
- "Great to see such diversity in speakers and attendees."
- "I learned so much and left feeling motivated."
- "A safe and inclusive space to share and listen."
- "It was both educational and uplifting."

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

- Increased awareness and understanding
- New connections and partnerships
- Renewed motivation to take action in our communities
- Commitment to continue the conversation beyond the conference.

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

Yes, definitely

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS?

"One not to be missed. You'll thank me later!"

IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING

To what extent did today's conference improve your understanding?

Neurodiversity and the diversity of lived experiences	Significantly improved understanding
The intersection of neurodiversity, race, culture and identity	Significantly improved understanding
Barriers to inclusion and equitable access	Significantly improved understanding
The importance of listening to lived experience	Greatly improved understanding
Practical approaches to making services, workplaces and communities more inclusive	Significantly improved understanding



STRONGER TOGETHER
COMMUNITY • VOICE • ACTION • CHANGE

KEY MESSAGES LEARNT

1. There's power in numbers.
2. One voice can galvanise into a movement that can transform a nation.
3. There's no shame in choosing one's battles.

WHAT DID PEOPLE ENJOY?

- Inspirational speakers and lived experiences
- Diverse range of voices and perspectives
- Thought-provoking discussions
- Networking and connecting with others
- Celebrating culture, history and community achievements
- A welcoming and inclusive atmosphere

KEY THEMES

- EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY
- EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE
- HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- COMMUNITY AND BEKILLS
- REPRESENTATION AND POSITIVE CHANGE

TOPICS FOR FUTURE EVENTS

- Neurodiversity and racial equity
- Inclusive recruitment and employment
- Leadership, advocacy and lived experience
- Community partnerships and influencing policy

SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT TIME

- More time for Q&A and discussion
- Even more community voices and youth involvement
- Workshops and practical sessions
- Greater representation from different cultures and faith backgrounds
- Explore specific topics in more depth
- Keep building the network and partnerships



A Closing Poem: Black History Month – Keep Going

We honour the past and the stories untold,
The voices, the courage, the lives we uphold.
Two books open doors for the young and the wise,
To question old stories and see with new eyes.

We gather to listen, to learn and to share,
To see the whole person and show that we care.
Let HOPE grow from dialogue, purposeful and clear,
And make room for voices we too seldom hear.

Let governors lead so our children can see,
That whoever they are, they have space to be.
In Bury, build pathways where concerns can be heard,
Where action and justice give weight to each word.

We read and we journal; we challenge our view,
Ask what White silence allows us to do.
When racism speaks, let us answer, not hide;
Let courage and action stand firm side by side.

Not just for October, not once in a year,
But each day we speak up, make change and draw near.
Black History Month is all year round:
Keep going; let justice and belonging abound.

Alyson Malach

Director

EDUK



Training ♦ Resources ♦ Network

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