



Welcome to Black History Month (BHM) October 2021 where we are #ProudToBe

This year the national theme is about celebrating the often unheralded accomplishments of Black Britons in every area of endeavour throughout history.

BHM means different things to different people, but in essence is an opportunity to reflect and celebrate the diverse history of those from Black and Caribbean descent. As the conversation has moved on over the years it is also used to celebrate wider ethnic and racial diversity as well. Across the UK Ambulance sector, we're using the month to celebrate some of our own ambulance sector colleagues, their diverse cultures and heritage using *#ProudToBe* and will also be looking at some of our heroes from the past.

History matters because it helps us as individuals and as societies to understand why our societies are the way they are and what they value. All people are in effect living histories.

Understanding links between the past and present are basic to our understanding of ourselves and our fellow humans. It is the story of us, defining who we are and where we have come from. It:

- Grounds us in our roots and gives us cultural connections and identity
- Helps us to understand the change and the need for change
- Reveals patterns in our past that often reflect where we are now and how we move forward
- Provides a foundation for activism to change views
- Makes us more empathetic to the experiences of others

I have shared my story in past years and discovering my heritage gave me a thirst for knowledge and I am constantly seeking to understand more. In doing so I have reduced my lifelong feeling of otherness and not belonging.

It is important to celebrate and promote the present. As a sector, we struggle with low level of representation from Black Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities, but all our CEO's have made commitments to improving representation. Having a workforce that represents the people we serve isn't just morally the right thing, but evidence shows us that it improves patient care and experience.

One of the things that our BAME colleagues can do to support this work is to be more visible. It is well known that people are more likely to consider a career in an organisation if they are able to see themselves working there; they are able to see there are already people who they look like them or that they can identify with. Alongside this, we also want to take the opportunity to share a little of our cultures and heritage because we are proud of who we are. We will be celebrating throughout the month with interviews, videos and recipes from colleagues.

Please head over to the [website](#) or follow us on twitter @NatAmbBME where we will be uploading new content every week.

Our National Ambulance BME Forum (NABMEF) Race for Care conference is being held on Thursday 7th October. This will be an exciting day combining a range of clinical, antiracist and cultural sessions and is open to all ambulance staff. Most exciting for me is an opportunity for me to interview one of my heroes, and Pride of Britain winner for her work in sickle cell care, Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu. You can still register at www.raceforcare.co.uk.

Jayne Phoenix

Deputy Chair of the National Ambulance BME forum, and Associate Director (Bank) South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS FT.