Achieving equity in the workplace – celebrating our Black sisters in social care

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**SPEAKERS**

Tricia Pereira, Jenny Green, Webinar attendee, Olayinka Thomas, Grace Salmon, Sue Ann Nnamani

**Tricia Pereira** 00:05

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Jenny. And thank you for joining us. This year's theme for Black History Month 2023 is celebrating and saluting our sisters in social care. This is an opportunity to shine a spotlight for a moment to celebrate the important roles that Black women have played. And as the official Black History Month site says, in shaping history, inspiring change, and building communities, the roles that we play every single day. But often, we don't really stop to think about or see what's around us. So a few years ago, around 2006 new affirmation phrases were born, such as Black girls rock. And then around 10 years ago, we had the hashtag Black girls on magic that was later shortened to Black girl magic. And that was trending all over Twitter. Those three simple words started a movement, a powerful movement of acknowledgement and recognition of who we are. And that celebrates the power, the beauty and the brilliance of Black woman. Its purpose is to fill us with pride. Many women especially Black women, their stories and their successes go untold and unheard. Many Black women in leadership roles, we are often in the unique jewel position of finding ourselves to be both hyper visible, and at times, very invisible. It's a really curious position to be in. However, representation is important. It's important to see people, women like ourselves, share their own stories. It's both inspirational and powerful. I have found that it empowers me, it empowers you to have the courage to think to feel and to believe. It really makes you think and feel if she can, then I can. This month for our Good News Friday feature we're sharing a blog each week from Black women working in social care. And today I'm super pleased and excited to introduce this webinar session sharing the life journeys of three women. Our fabulous women, who I have a lot of admiration for are Sue Ann Nnamani, Olayinka Thomas and Laleen Grace Salmon. Before I hand over to Jenny Green, our national EDI lead, I would like to thank all the people at Skills for Care who've supported putting this webinar together, and to all the Black and Brown women working in Skills for Care and in social care all over for inspiring me every single day, whether you know it or not. I'm really excited about the webinar and to hear the journeys of our three panellists. Thank you I hand back over to Jenny.

**Jenny Green** 03:00

Thank you, Trisha. Okay, so thank you so much. As Tricia said, our panellists guests are Grace Salmon. Grace is a retired nurse, midwife, district nurse manager and manager of three residential care homes for the elderly in southeast London. She also has experience of caring for the elderly, looking into the process of Gerontology in both Canada and the US. Sue Ann Nnamani is the registered manager of Priscilla Wakefield house nursing home, which is a 117 bed, nursing home in Harringay, London. Sue Ann has been a registered manager for 20 years in social care, and is passionate about social care. Olayinka is a former registered manager. After many years of experience, now a Social Care Consultant and a renowned trainer. Having seen and experienced firsthand cases of discrimination and workplace micro aggression, Olayinka founded the Black Women in Care community platform to support Black women and other minority ethnic groups that work in health and social care sector. She's also the proud founder of a Skills for Care endorsed training organisation, which is a testament to her commitment to staff development, and providing quality education for those who work in the care sector. We welcome those of you who have taken the time to join us for what will be a stimulating discussion in a space where we can share our experiences by saluting and celebrating the experiences of our panellists, and those of the many other Black sisters whose stories we have yet to explore. So without further ado, I'm going to ask each of our panellists to share with us what led you to want to work in social care. So what we hope for is a discussion. And as Sarah said, if you've got any comments that you want to put in the chat, please do. And we'll try and see if we can pick up any of those later on. So first of all, I'm going to go to Grace and on the your screen she's there as Laleen but we are going to refer to as Grace today. Grace, so I'm going to ask each of you, please share with us what led you to want to work in social care,

**Grace Salmon** 05:37

For me, my interest in social care started from working as a community nurse, with the elderly. And it continued, as I went up into working in district nursing, I also had various experience with not only the residents I look after, or the patient, but their family, and the complexity of delivering care. I think back in 1990, when I returned from Canada, after spending about two years there working with the elderly, and doing kind of research work in gerontology, I came back to the UK and I thought, well, I need to do something with this experience. So I was talking to a friend of mine, her name was Barbara Morgan. And she said, why don't you go into social care? Maybe I could do so. So I applied for the job as a residential care manager for a home in southeast London. And I was successful. So that was my way into social care. And I did that role for about 15 years.

**Jenny Green** 06:59

Thank you, Grace, shall I move to Sue Ann.

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 07:03

So I love to share my story, because it's the why that makes it so important for us to have a view of why social care is at the heart of why we're in the industry. So I'm from a small Caribbean island called St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And growing up in the Caribbean, we didn't have such facilities called nursing homes, or care homes. What we had, sadly, and the terminology obviously now upsets me because I know better, we had a place called poor home on quote, which is where all the people who had mental health related issues who couldn't be cared for in the in the society, were placed in, you know, a building, let's say, and what really stood out for me as a child growing up is that my mom, she was a part of the Lions Club Association, which we were very affluent. Her plight was to support people who didn't have and what we do is after church, as children, my mom would cook and bake, and take it to this place that we called, again, poor home. And as children, we'd paint nails, we'd sing, and we'd engage with these individuals in this facility. And I think that's where my journey started. Now, I went to university in Canada, I finished my HR degree. And my mom said, you know, your cousins, my sisters, siblings are all in the UK. Why don't you look to migrate in there to see what you could do with your degree. I came to the UK in 2003 as a British citizen, because one of the little back story again, is that I was actually born in Tortola, which is a British Virgin Islands. So I was the only one of four siblings to be born as a British citizen. So when I migrated here in 2003, I looked for jobs in the centre of London, doing HR, doing HR administration, whatever jobs that you know, I could acquire based on my skills and my degree. Sadly, I was told my degree was not a UK standing degree. So I had to go back to the drawing board, which I did at University of East London to upgrade my degree. At which point I thought I'd spent four years another one year to catch up and still I was not able to acquire those jobs that I was really looking forward to doing. And based on my history, I decided to go into this role of Team Leader which in my mind, it was booking appointments, more of an administrative or clerical role. So I applied for the job got the job and rocked up on my first day after passing my interview and getting the job in a pinstripe suit with high heeled shoes. And I was told by the carer who inducted me, which we're still friends to this day, that I might be finding that I'm not in the correct attire. So I then asked the question, why am I, you know, my attire is not suitable. And she said, I think you might want to wear some more comfortable clothing, because we're going to start the journey with personal care. Now, that's when I was introduced to care in its full sense. And I left there thinking, Mum, why did I spend four years at university and you know, and all sorts of thoughts came into my head. However, what really made the difference for me is to see the smiles on the faces of the residents. And to be around the elderly, that's actually helped us to be where we are today. And in that care setting, it was a small 16 bedded residential care home in Wandsworth, and I remembered having my two key clients both of which I knew inside and out. We also had a resident there that was a Jamaican resident that always wanted to make bakes. And I remember her just asking, can she fry this bakes? And everybody was no, no, no, it's health and safety risk, risk, risk. And I said, you know, why not get a little small hot plate, I will stand and fry them for her. If she is able to wash her hands and need her dough, she would feel at least a bit more independent. And we did that. And we celebrated that by actually having every other day a breakfast at the home with all the residents sat around eating this residents bakes. So I felt that I was rightly placed. I think sometimes our journeys may not be where we want them to be. But when you have that opportunity, and you're given that, so within a very short space of time, the manager was seconded. I became the acting manager, and then went on to become a registered manager. And my journey has not left me out of social care ever since. So that's my journey.

**Jenny Green** 12:21

Thank you, Sue Ann. And sadly, I could see on the faces of the panellists that some of your story is not unfamiliar to us, as Black women about being told you're not in the right place, you don't have the right qualification. But let me move on to Olayinka. Where did your journey start into social care?

**Olayinka Thomas** 12:45

Thank you very much for asking journey. My own journey started, I think from the age of 13 to 16. And as I look back into my childhood, my fondest memory has been spending time with my grandmother coming out to appointments appointment, and supporting assisting with personal care. I remember, she would call me and me into the bathroom to support her with her personal care. So I became intrigued with the way the doctors took care of her. And back to the background and she lives in a little village in Nigeria, called the place in Ogun state. So there wasn't anything like social care. So every care that she needed has to be provided by a family member. And so I happened to be a favourite. So she will call me to assist her. So I became intrigued with the way the doctors took care of her and the people around us. So that sort of sparked my interest in healthcare in general. So even though I remember telling her that Grandma, I'm going to become a doctor. So even though I did not become a doctor, I found my calling as a specialist. That is what I call carers, I find myself and my colleagues, especially as being the first to diagnose clients. So I've developed over the years, I've developed a close relationship with my service users that has allowed me to understand every lead, and I'm able to interpret every side. So I'm grateful for that experience. And then coming to the United Kingdom. The first first thing, so I've got the passion, I believe that I had the skills even from a young age, and the person that introduced me because I came into the country as an international student. And I remember trying to find a job at that time. That also gives me the flexibility to also pursue my university career. I remember the name of the person is Miss Lara and she told me Oh, why don't you try coming to my organisation? It was a domiciliary care organisation. And she said what have you tried? You know, the hours will be given to you do you know obviously they will have to look at your timetables and all of that. I said okay, I'm gonna give it a try. So I went for the interview, and I passed the interview, and since then, it has been you know, it has been such a pleasure supporting people there in need. And as I reflect back on my journey and I'm reminded of all the unpaid carers who are happy working tirelessly to provide support for their loved ones. And I would like to say heartfelt thank you for all that they do that or wherever, dedication and making, you know making the world a better place. And so I mean, all the incredible work that you do every single day. Thank you.

**Jenny Green** 15:21

Thank you. So, I would like to explore a little bit with you some of the challenges that you've experienced on your social care journey. And when I was thinking about this, it reminded me of a time when I started in social work. And actually, I chose to do community work. And I was working for an organisation who worked with elders, and they wanted to set up a Black elders group. And so I went to the local authority, and I said, could you give me a list of the people that are on your books, etc, who are from minoritised communities? And they said, Well, we haven't got any, there aren't any. And I knew this couldn't be right. Because my mum and her age group, people have friends. And the age group of those people told me that there must be some of these people around. But they said they weren't any. So I went, this was in Harringay, and I went on the street corner at seven sisters. And I stopped people who I thought were of the right age range. And I asked them, would they be interested in joining this group. So eventually, I got enough people and I set up the group. And what was interesting, the assumptions that we made, because the traditional group that was there, mostly white participants, they did bingo, and all these other things. This other group wanted to do, they had things like dominoes, and they had music and whatever. And what started to happen was that people who were in the other group said, Oh, we like what they're doing in that group, we're coming across to that group, which was great. But it also said something about the assumptions we were making about who would want to do want. And so that was a lesson way back then about not making those assumptions. And the other assumption that I think was around at the time, and I do wonder if those assumptions are still there, in terms of the challenges, is that some of those people, we assumed their own community was looking after them. And what we found in working with those people was that actually, they were not necessarily doing so. And many of them were quite lonely, not looked after by their children, as we assumed people from minoritised communities did. And so it raised a lot of issues. Those were some of the early challenges, and assumptions and challenges to myself that I had to encounter. So I'm asking you, as Black women who came into social care, can you share with us what challenges you've encountered on your social care journey? What were your responses and what strategies work for you? So let me start with Sue Ann.

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 18:15

So the biggest challenge for me in social care was the fact that the registered managers role, not many people understand the multifaceted elements of the role. And I felt that in terms of there was a struggle for notoriety around the role in social care. Whereas if you said I work for the NHS, and I'm in this role, it's like, everybody knew what that meant. But in social care, and I'll give an example. So during the COVID pandemic, I was heading into work, and I got pulled over by the police asking me to evidence that I was a key worker and why I was leaving my house. And I said, I'm a registered manager for service. And I was actually needed in the service. And they said, well, if you're not a registered nurse, you're not a healthcare assistant, you're not classed as a key worker. I just said, thank you, respectfully, and I pretended to be heading back to the direction of house, spun my car around when I saw that there was no police and came straight into work. Because what I felt is that there was a lack of understanding of how many roles as a registered manager you play, because if you're not in the service, you're not acting as part of the team, people would tend to not want to do you know, various things that you'd want them to do, which is to come into work as a carer. So when you have a shortage of your staffing levels, you're not going to go oh, I'm gonna sit in an office and do nothing. You're gonna be on the floor. You're going to be supporting if there's no chef that's coming. I remember during COVID It was myself and my management team that actually went in there and whether you knew how to make wholemeal porridge or not, if you knew how to scramble some eggs, you got to knowing, because you had to make sure that the residents needs were being met. So I think that for me is my biggest challenge in terms of my social care role.

**Jenny Green** 20:15

Thank you. And at some point, as we move on, especially under successes, it would be really good to hear some of that work that you've managed to do around the international and bringing in staff to meet the needs of your varied residents Sue Ann. So Grace challenges, some of your challenges.

**Grace Salmon** 20:36

I think, I agree Sue Ann they're kind of multifaceted. I think, for me, the first thing is moving from what I would call a very structured environment and going into social care. I was passionate because being a district nurse, I've seen a lot of caring for the elderly, in different age groups, but also the family dynamics, and the link with providing care in a holistic approach. So when I got the job role, I think, well, my main challenge was acceptance, because the home was owned and run by the local social services. And the home was taken over by private sector. So before I even got there, there was this idea or rumour that, okay, these private sector managers are coming to cut the workforce, they were going to reduce the care. So that was one of the challenges. The other challenges was, as I said, acceptance by my peers, because there was a Black manager in a very white dominated company, of white managers. So I think in total, there were only about three of us as Black managers. So that's second struggle. The other struggle I face or challenges I wouldn't call a struggle, challenges was the staff group. Lovely staff came over from social services, and they had a different approach, I have to say, they think they could just go in to the kitchen help themselves to some toast, even when they're on duty. They'll go and make themselves some tea, or go and sit down, they'll go outside and have a smoke and that type of thing was going on. So I found that, yes, that was one of the things I had to address quite quickly. Why things are, you know, one of the things that I did, is not going with, I'm going to use this analogy not with a whip. But I went in and explain that this is a new approach to care. And this is what I would like all the staff to take on board. So I tried to bring the staff on board with this new concept. Yes, and eventually I did succeed. I didn't say it was easy. But I did succeed. And it just needs commitment, tenacity, and sometimes strong will, because you're not only working with the residents, their relatives, the local community, but my peers, and also from senior management, being in the private sector. They do provide care. They do provide very excellent care. But as a manager, and probably Sue Ann can probably agree with me, the bottom line, you had to balance the quality of care with the income. And that was a challenge for me. But yes, eventually I did. Overcoming. Yes. And also another thing for me staff group. The staff group was quite diverse. And I find some of, I'm going to use this word quite loosely, some of the staff from ethnic minority, because I came in as a manager, they expect, I can allow them to have some leeway. They're coming in late and was excused or miss the bus or I said, I'm sorry. Your duty starts at half past seven. I expect you to be on duty for half past seven. I know you have issues with childcare, and bus. Well, that's something we need to address. So that was one thing I had to address quite quickly.

**Jenny Green** 24:48

So in some ways what I'm hearing though, is that sometimes when you're working with somebody like yourself, there might be an element of expectation of some kind of collusion that you would allow things and then on the other hand a bit, what I'm hearing also is that for some people, you being Black manager, who's now trying to tell them what to do, they might have found that quite difficult to accept as well. So you're sort of constantly walking this tight rope. If I move on, Olayinka, tell us a bit about some of the challenges you've experienced.

**Olayinka Thomas** 25:31

Thank you. And just following on from what everyone has said, earlier, I think I'll be speaking about three challenges that I've faced personally, myself. One of which is, is a backstory of one of the members of Black Women in Care. I think one of the biggest challenges that I face as a Black woman that's working within the health and social care, I was working as a carer, I think I didn't face more challenges, because I'm on the front line. And there wasn't much, I think, not that there wasn't much expectation. But as a manager, I've faced with a stereotyping whereby some people or some organisation believe that Black people lack some kind of skills and education as required for a particular field. And I'll make an example, I went for a job interview, the salary that was advertised, I'm just going to it was between some certain range from this range to the other range. And during the interview, and after the interview I passed to be about two times past the interview. And when the offer letter came, the offer, the salary they were offering was below the first range. So it was below the first range. So this is, was let's assume, just as an example, that is not the actual salary. So it was announced to pay 20, between 20 to 25,000. So that will be depending on your experiences. So after the interview, I was then offered 16,000 pounds, just as an example. And it's just show that they you know, it's just show that people assumption of a Black person, that you lack the skills. And this is what the director of an organisation actually say to me said, Yeah, but you know, you've never been a manager before. So this is just, you know, we're just trying to set up salary and then you, when you do really well, we can use that as a bonus for you, every quarter of the year. And it's actually what happened, and it will do. The other thing is assumptions of Black people coming from a broken home. And this also happened after I started a job. One of the directors of the organisation said to me, Oh, will you able to do all of these things together? And this is a management role. Have you been able to do all of this together? You know, I said this because the previous person comparing me to the another black person that worked within the organisation, say that the previous Black person, you know, because she knows she's a single mother, she's unable to do all of this, how are you able to manage it? Do you have a husband? This is an actual question that I've been asked doing my role, so do you have a husband because sometimes I wonder how are you able to cope. I know you have children and all of that. So, you know, the stereotyping is one of the biggest challenges and the other one is lack of respect for Black managers. And I say this, with a careful word as a Black woman who has worked her way up the ranks, I've done different roles being a carer, being a care coordinator, being a supervisor, I've been a deputy manager before then, before I became a a registered manager. I've seen the first and how this lack of respect has hindered my professional development despite my expertise, despite my experiences, despite my dedication towards my role, I have been overlooked, sometimes for promotions within organisation, I've been overlooked by my junior colleagues because how could a Black person tell them what to do, you have a Black manager tell them what to do. So I think this lack of respect that I've also faced but I've managed over the years, I've managed to overcome this. And when we are sharing our successes, it's one of the things that I will share. I'm not one of the things that has helped me and that's one of the reason I started back from any community as well to support all the Black people that are working within the health and social care to overcome stereotyping because it will come. It might not come in the way that you are thinking, it will come in a subtle way that you will take some reflection or even share it with other people for you to realise that you've actually been stereotyped or you know, your organisation doesn't respect you as much. It doesn't matter how many, how much effort you put into your role. And the other the third one that I would like to mention is discrimination. You know, it's still very much prevalent in a society today, in other people's experiences I've listened to and one of which was during the COVID 2020, one of the member of Black Women in Care was a social worker, actually shared with me there were instances that she was passed over to work from home. And when she was later allowed to work from home, she wasn't provided with the right equipment that actually led her to have arthritis because she had a type a report from a telephone. So she wasn't provided with the right equipment. I'm not gonna say much about it because the case is currently in court. And, you know, the obviously they're looking into that. But these are just some of the challenges that I've faced personally. And some of the other people have faced within health and social care. So yeah, that's one of the things I wanted to mention. Thank you,

**Jenny Green** 30:32

Thank you for that. It is quite interesting to hear what we're saying, because none of us know the stories that we're going to share. And yet we recognise those stories, because they're so common to so many of us. Which, that's a sad fact. But it's true. So I want to help ask you to still think about some of those challenges and the strategies that you've used. But really, what I'm interested in now is knowing your successes, what really helped you to achieve the success that you've actually had? So let me go to Olayinka, because I haven't started with you yet. So let me go to you, how have you achieved those successes that you've had.

**Olayinka Thomas** 31:23

Okay, well, one of the themes, I think it's probably down to some of the strategies that I've used over the years, and one of which is being emotionally intelligent. You know, I've been able to over the years to be able to manage my own emotions, and the emotions of other people. So it has been a powerful tool that has helped me to overcome challenges, and navigate through the difficult challenges that I've gone through during my workplace. And the other the other thing that has helped me is being resilient. This has played a major role in my life, helping me to overcome various challenges. You know, when I went through some of the challenges I went through during work, I was downcast and wasn't sure which organisation do I go to, do I set up my own business, do I just work as a self employed because I wasn't sure you know, working with any other organisation. So, you know, being resilient has helped me to, has given me the strength and the determination to continue to move forward despite the challenges that are faced. And so part of the success story is there are two F's that has really helped me over the years, and one of which is my faith, believers. So I'm somebody that prays. And the second thing is that the second F is friends. When I say friends, family, my colleagues, and the community at large, you know, my mentor, as well, Dr. Dotson, which is used as my mentor, I remember having some issues at work, I was ready to just let go, I was ready to resign now right then, which would have given me, putting me in a very difficult situation financially, but I was just ready to go because my mental health was much more important than the salary was I getting. But you know, she told me to be patient to calm down, I actually did some huffing and puffing, trying to do some, I remember on the phone, trying to breathe in and breathe out with her on the phone, because it was just too much on that day. So you know, that's why my faith and my friends, which is my colleagues, and some of my colleagues and you know, the community as large, has helped me to overcome the challenges. And over the years as well, we've been able to empower 1000s of women in Black Women in Care. You know, that's why we started the Black Women in Care awards. I remember when we started in 2021, one of the recipients of that award is a care manager, was working in health and social care for 32 years. And I remember crying on the platform that day that she has been working for many years. And she's never been, you know, obviously when we work, and I have to say, when we work, and especially people working within health and social care, social care in particular, we're not working for the recognition, we're not working for us to be rewarded, we're working because we love what we're doing. When the recognition come obviously, it's an addition to say that we'll be recognised. So this person cried on the platform that day, and you know, what's beyond those tears, many years of life at work. Many years have been overlooked. Many years have been undervalued. And that day, it was just that day that she received an award for the Care Manager of the Year. So I've been able to also bring that into the platform, recognising people that are working within the health and social care and if anyone would like to obviously nominate any member so you don't have to be a Black person to receive that award, you only have to be a Black person to nominate as if you're working with each one of your colleagues could nominate you for the awards as well. So the awards is still open till Friday. And if I'm permitted to share the link later on. Thank you.

**Jenny Green** 35:05

Thank you for that. Grace.

**Grace Salmon** 35:07

Yes. Well, thank you for giving me the opportunity, I think, for me, my success, is the impact I've made on people's life. I think that's the impact that have made. And to be a role model for others. I think one of the things, and that's probably, I have that from my mother, she always aspired to encourage others, don't care what the circumstances are, it's to look and see how you can get out of this. If he's a difficulty, how can I get out of this difficulty, using it looking at this as an opportunity to learn more about yourself and to learn about the issue. So for me, my greatest, I think achievement is that I have been a role model to many people. And also, it has helped others in looking at themselves and developing in their individual potential or individual job role. I think the other thing for me is, I just enjoy working with elderly. That's my passion. And even though I'm not working with them, I'm active in the community. And I do try to get the elderly to say you have a voice, because they often overlook in this society, especially with the technology and all the things that is going on, you know, you have a voice, you've had experience, you have a story to tell. You might not be very articulate in getting the information over, but you have a story to tell, be a role model, don't care whether it's just giving words of encouragement, or just show them, if you want to do this skill, this is how you'll do it. Be a teacher. And also for me, I have to learn that I can be teachable, because I can learn from others. I'm learning from my grandchildren now. Yeah, so that's just two of my achievements. And I think for me, is just looking back on the years of working in nursing and in social care, and the experience I have gained, and I would encourage anyone to make sure whatever you're doing, you must have a passion for it is okay, having the qualification and all the skills, but you haven't got a passion and a commitment that's going to take you when the road gets rough. When it gets tough. You need to have, as Olayinka said before, you need a support group of friends and family. And yes, you can do it. Not easy, but you can do it.

**Jenny Green** 38:12

We'll move on to Sue Ann, your successes. What has driven that success for you? What helped you to achieve that success?

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 38:22

So I think for me, it's about staying focused. At times, you know, as Black women, we probably feel we could take on the world. And I'm such one person. So I don't often go at it at a small level, I try to attack it from a larger spectrum. But I think for me, it's about focusing on what you're good at and focusing on what you can achieve within your setting, and then letting that speak for itself. And one of them that you've asked me to share about Jenny, is around international recruitment. Now, we all know that social care struggled for many, many years with depleting staffing levels, particularly for registered nurses in social care, we often become on adaptation centre for many who are entering the UK to get their NMC pins, and they don't tend to stay in social care, they tend to move on to the health sector, ie the NHS because it may be is more attractive, I don't think financially attractive, but I think it's attractive as an organisation. And for me, when we did our international recruitment, we didn't just want to take staff from one area, we wanted to be diverse because of the diverse nature of the service that we provide. So we've got a lot of ethnicities within the service. And one of the biggest successes that I feel I've brought about in terms of a change in this environment is to support people to continue to have those cultural aspects maintained, such as foods such as their religion, you know, maintaining their values, etc. And I think that's where in terms of recruitment, when you're doing that, you have to look at whether those values sit within the organisation, and the individuals that you're supporting to come into the organisation has those set values. And I think for me, the international recruitment that we've done here has been tremendous, we've seen so much in terms of what they have to offer. And we've been able to support them as well to settle, most of them are now past the year with us and still going. And we would continue to be giving them that support throughout their career journey within social care. So we've now gone to zero agency, both for our healthcare assistants, and also for registered nurses. And we're still homegrowning our talent. So senior healthcare assistants are becoming registered nurses, we've got progression routes through the nursing associate programme. So we've also got candidates who are in the wellbeing coordinator role, who are currently at university studying to become nurse associates. And we've already put nurse associates through the programme and we will continue to do so as part of the progression for our social care workers. So again, there's so many roles that people can play with in social care that probably they don't know about administrative roles, auxilary roles. So it's not where it's just carers that work in social care, or registered nurses, there are so many roles that people can play within the sector.

**Jenny Green** 41:51

Thank you. I wanted to move on to your learning, but I'm also conscious of time. So I would like you to just focus on one small thing that you think that you've learned, as a Black woman in social care, and be quite succinct with your answer so that I can then move us on to the next question, which is the last question that I have for you. So what important lesson have you learned as a black woman in social care? Grace?

**Grace Salmon** 42:26

Wow. I think for me, it's confidence, self confidence, and you need tenacity. You need to make sure you have the appropriate skills to do the job or the job role. But also, you must be receptive to learn new skills, as not all only going to college or university can learn the skills on the job. But you must be receptive to learn and to continue learning.

**Jenny Green** 42:57

Thank you. Olayinka?

**Olayinka Thomas** 43:04

One of the lessons, thanks for that, one of the lessons that I've learned and advice going forward, is the advice that was given to me when I was starting my career in care. I remember, Miss Lara telling me that if you put your heart to it, it becomes easier. So that's the advice I would encourage everyone is working in health and social care, that when you work, you know, you have to be aware that when people don't recognise your work it is not necessarily a reflection of the quality of your work. Just put your heart to it, and it will become easier.

**Jenny Green** 43:42

Thank you. Sue Ann?

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 43:46

So, yeah, my important lesson is just to be patient, and stay focused on your goals, let nothing stand in the way of your progress or your success. And most importantly, if you're in social care, it's about relationship-centred care. So share your life story with your elderly residents and let them share their life story with you because you spend so much time at work rather than even at home, that it becomes your home. So I think if you have that ethos, it will take you a long way.

**Jenny Green** 44:22

So some of what I've heard coming out from what you've been saying, I would say much of what we've learned is the things that we've learned from the Windrush generation, the people who've been here a long time, I heard things like emotional intelligence, resilience, belief in self, self-confidence, tenacity, recognising that you can always be learning, faith, passion, friends community at large by being empowered by other Black women. So there are so many things that seem to have helped you on your journey. The last question that I have for you before I have a look and see if we've got any questions that we need to take from our audience is who have been your role models. Trisha Pereira wrote a blog and she mentioned Grace as one of her role models when she was coming up. So who have been your role models, and it doesn't matter whether they're from any part of your life, I would certainly say my mother was a role model to me. I thought she was a brilliant woman, but she never got the recognition for that, for her brilliance. So as a Black woman who's been your role models, or you might want to share as Olayinka did the best advice given to you on your journey. So I'm going to come to each of you and ask you to be brief. And tell us who that person is, if you have that person, or what that best advice was? Grace.

**Grace Salmon** 46:01

Right. I think my role model was my mother. She was an inspirational lady. And though when I was growing up, I didn't think she was. But she set an example for me both as a mother, and as a member of our local community. And one of the things I learned she was passionate to share knowledge, food, money, whatever, with others. And having a connection with other people was very important. So she was my main role model. I think later on, I met, he was a retired school, a head teacher. And he encouraged me, I went for an interview once, and I wasn't successful. And I was very disappointed. And he said, Grace, come on now. Look at it, where did you go wrong, and learn from that experience. And he gave me as they call a pet talk. And he just got me to focus on my ability to deliver the role, the job role. So he was one of my encourager, motivator, and a mentor.

**Jenny Green** 47:23

Okay, thank you, Olayinka you gave us some advice, now tell us who your role model is.

**Olayinka Thomas** 47:30

Okay. Just some advice to people that might be thinking of starting their career in care. Or maybe you're currently working in care, and you're wondering what's next up for you, I would like to say to you that I see you, because certainly caring in the care industry can be incredibly rewarding, I must say. But it can also be a daunting one. So there are many challenges that you might have to overcome, both professionally and personally. But there is one piece of advice I would say is to be persistent. Persistent means stay focused on your goals. Even when things get tough. It means you putting in that extra effort, working smarter and never giving up on your dreams. And when you encounter the obstacles which you will, the best systems will help you to push through and then come out on the other side stronger and wiser. And the other advice I was given as well. And I will say to people, though, also, I'm thinking about a career in care is to keep a positive attitude. Your attitude can either make or break your success. So stay optimistic, focus on the good and learn from your mistakes as well. And when things don't go according to plan, view them as an opportunity to grow and to improve. Thank you.

**Jenny Green** 48:43

Thank you. Sue Ann

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 48:46

My role model is my mom. She is who got me into the industry, from a child watching her and watching her life and how she's impacted on others made me want to aspire to be like her. And my role model in terms of work was my first ever manager in the UK, who often told me to inhale, exhale, before I send an email because often times, you know, we are expected to be a certain way as a Black person. And if we only just reflect and calm ourselves, we will be able to articulate and get across the message in a much better way. So I learnt that very early on in my career, which I think has really propelled and helped me to be where I am today.

**Jenny Green** 49:33

Thank you so much, all of you really, for sharing so much, giving us so much insight into some of your experiences. I would like to see if there's one or two people who might have a comment. If you could just raise your hand, electronically through reactions, and I'll take two or three comments from the floor. And then I'm going to wrap up the session. Sarah Eden. Yeah, let's see you. Thank you. Go ahead.

**Webinar attendee** 50:08

Hi. Yes, so it's a comment, not a question. And it was really just to say that I go to quite a few briefings, forums, whatever. And you kind of come away from them. And you go, yeah, that was all right. Good. Yeah, got a lot of, you know, got a bit from it. But I have to say, I just wanted to really, really thank the three speakers today. Because the information that you've given, obviously, you have to give context, the backstory and all of that, which is absolutely, you know, really, you know, really valuable. But for me, it was your success stories, and also, the, the information about the kind of tips and hints that you're giving to people to say, stay strong, be positive, be passionate, all of those kinds of things. And I think, often we're our biggest critics, we put pressure on ourselves, and we don't take that time to go look at me, I've been in this industry for 30 years, and what I've achieved and we just constantly kind of look at the negative. So it's, it's lovely to hear your success stories, and to share those and to remind us all here today, that we have to kind of pat ourselves on the back and say, well done. So thank you for that kind of reminder. And thank you so much. It's been a really, really brilliant session.

**Jenny Green** 51:16

Thank you, Sarah. Is there anyone else who'd like to make a comment before I go back to pulling things together. But I'm taking from what Sara said that she got something from this, and this is what we wanted to bring out from this session for you. I'd like to thank each of you for sharing your insightful recollections and the lessons learned along the way, and our audience for coming on that journey with us. Hopefully, t will be the start of many such sharing opportunities. Thanks also to my Skills for Care colleagues, Tricia, Sarah Price, Sarah Spurr, Jo Steele, who have been endlessly supportive in helping this webinar to come together, the webinar will be as Sarah told you, the webinar will be available. And we will be trying to pull out some of the learning and the tips that came out from today. And adding it that to this before we make it available to you through Skills for Care. But as I'm winding this up, I want to go back to each of our panellists and just ask them to share one final thing that they would like to leave the audience with. Grace.

**Grace Salmon** 52:39

Thank you, yes, what I would like to leave with the audience and is self belief in yourself as a Black person. And also that you have the same opportunity. And now you use the word quite loosely, like everyone else. And as a speaker said before, at least, sometimes we need to kind of take that burden and chip off our shoulders, that because we are Black, we can't achieve we can. And I can tell you, that is true, because I have achieved and many of my colleagues have achieved, not saying the journey is easy. But if you have that tenacity, that commitment, that passion. And the quest to learn and keep abreast and self believe in yourself, you get along very well in life. And you can apply this not only in your job role, but also in your role as an individual in the community, or within your family structure.

**Jenny Green** 53:51

Thank you, Sue Ann.

**Sue Ann Nnamani** 53:56

So I'd like to leave you with just a few words. Be strong, be brave. And I know that not a social care isn't for everyone. But if you feel that you've got a passion for the sector, I think you'd be blessed with what the outcomes will be for you if you did enter the sector. And we are always looking for new talent.

**Jenny Green** 54:22

Thank you, Olayinka.

**Olayinka Thomas** 54:24

I would like to share that you should stay motivated. Stay motivated, find ways to keep yourself inspired and motivated, celebrate your progress. Surround yourself with supportive people and keep learning and growing knowing that there are other people cheering you on. And then finally I would like to say I love this sentence that you're blessed when you care. As because at the moment of you being careful, you will find yourself cared for. Thank you

**Jenny Green** 54:59

Thank you. We've come to the end of this, us celebrating and saluting our Black sisters webinar, I do hope that you've been able to take something away from this. I've had a long and varied career in social work and social care. And it was nice to hear about being empowered by other Black women. Because I know that when I came into the, into this profession, there were very few Black women that I could turn to. And two names that I want to mention as role models, which you probably don't know about them is Pat Massey. She was my colleague at CETSWA. And Ruth Prime, who was one of the first and I don't know if she was the only social services inspectors. But I met her as a manager in working with adults, and she's written books about working with adults, working with minority ethnic adults, caring for their needs, and so on, quite often were forgotten. And so I am thankful for this opportunity to remember and to have shared with you the experience of our panellists today, because we do stand on the shoulders of the Windrush generation, and the many women that have gone before us who have not had the recognition that we've had today. So I thank you all for joining us and for staying with us.