

SESLIP Black and Global Majority (BGM) Workforce Equity

Period: April 2026 – March 2028

1 Executive Summary

This business case proposes a two-year programme to improve workforce equity for Black and Global Majority staff across SESLIP authorities. Earlier research found low participation, mistrust stemming from experiences of tokenism, inconsistent responses to discrimination and incomplete HR and equality data. The programme resets engagement through preparatory relationship-building and a September 2026 co-design conference, supported by specialist consultant input to strengthen facilitation, intervention design and implementation readiness. It pilots practical interventions such as mentoring and progression pathways, develops microaggression response mechanisms and supports anti-racist supervision standards. Evidence is gathered continuously so the programme can adapt in real time and then evaluate outcomes at endline.

Change in this area depends on trust and visible action. One-off consultations have not shifted experience or confidence. A longer window allows authorities to demonstrate follow-through, strengthen HR and equality data and co-own solutions with staff. The design moves from identifying issues to building interventions that fit local conditions and can be adopted region-wide.

2 Strategic Rationale

2.1 Existing Evidence

From 2024 to 2026, evidence across SESLIP showed that BGM staff participation remains low when engagement is episodic. The BGM evidence reveals significant workforce inequities, extremely low participation rates, and widespread mistrust rooted in historical experiences of tokenism, unfulfilled commitments, inconsistent responses to discrimination, and incomplete or inaccessible HR/EDI data.

Attempts to gather new data or consult staff through short, one-off engagements have proven insufficient, participation remains low unless trust, presence, and clear follow-through are demonstrated.

Improving workforce equity therefore requires:

- Relational engagement with BGM staff and leaders, supported by preparatory touchpoints and a September 2026 in-person co-design conference.
- Slow-build trust, based on visible action rather than diagnostic exercises.

- Iterative piloting of practical interventions such as mentoring, progression pathways, and microaggression response mechanisms.
- Sustained organisational support, including leadership buy-in and improved HR data systems.
- Context-responsive adjustment, as different authorities face different workforce conditions.

The BGM strand must transition from “identifying the issues” to actively implementing and refining solutions over time.

3 Why a Two-Year Delivery Window Is Essential

- Trust-building with communities who have experienced symbolic engagement needs time and visible action.
- Practical interventions such as mentoring, progression routes and microaggression response require piloting and iteration.
- Measurable change relies on baseline to midline to endline evidence and continuous monitoring of safety and inclusion.
- Variation across authorities makes adaptation time essential and increases the odds of genuine adoption.
- Sustained support helps leaders and practitioners hold the line when competing pressures arise.

4 Research Approach

The programme treats research and evaluation as an integrated learning system that sits inside delivery rather than on the side of it. Evidence is gathered continuously and then synthesised at key points, so that practical decisions are informed by what staff and leaders are experiencing in real time. Methods are mixed, participation is deliberate and safe, and measures are organised to track conditions for equity as well as outcomes such as retention and progression. The approach is structured across five phases set out below.

4.1 Evidence of Demand and Case for Targeted Regional Support (*April – June 2026*)

The April to June period provided a clear test of demand for targeted SESLIP BGM support. Reading requested specialist support because local workforce concerns, including high attrition among BGM staff, were affecting confidence, trust, stability and service delivery. The April 2026 online Roadshow in Reading was used to reintroduce the work and encourage participation. This

was followed by co-design workshop in May, bringing together staff, practitioners, social workers, team managers and service managers to explore the issues in depth.

The Reading work should not be seen as an isolated local example. Many of the concerns surfaced in Reading were also reflected in the wider BGM project through interviews with other local authorities and the regional survey. The scale and form of the issues may vary between councils, but the underlying themes are shared: confidence in reporting routes, responses to discriminatory behaviour, redress, accountability, progression, psychological safety and the gap between policy and day-to-day practice.

This makes the case for a SESLIP-wide approach stronger. If each authority responds separately, learning is likely to remain fragmented, and councils may repeat similar engagement exercises without building shared solutions. A regional approach allows SESLIP to identify where issues are most acute, draw out effective practice where it already exists, and support authorities to adapt that learning to their own context. It also creates a more credible mechanism for addressing concerns that are too sensitive to be resolved through surveys, written feedback or one-off consultation alone.

The value of the Reading work is that it moved from listening to action, which has been fed back into the broader project. Staff experience has been translated into co-designed practical leadership recommendations, including clearer progression routes, stronger routes for redress, more consistent accountability, anti-racism forums, and access to independent reflective or psychological support where appropriate. This matters because workforce equity is not separate from service quality: staff who feel heard, safe, included and able to progress are better placed to provide consistent, relationship-based support to children and families. Continued BGM project delivery would give SESLIP the capacity to support councils through sensitive, trust-based engagement; bring authorities together in person where collaboration is needed; share good practice more systematically and turn local evidence into practical regional approaches.

4.2 Engagement reset and co-design (July - September 2026)

This opening phase resets relationships with BGM staff and leaders and establishes shared ownership of the programme. In September 2026, an in-person regional co-design conference will convene staff networks, HR and OD leads, principal social workers, and senior sponsors. The session will set ground rules for psychological safety, agree participation norms and outline what action the programme will and will not take. Co-design activities will include small-group design labs to refine problem statements, prioritise practical interventions, and sketch early theories of change for mentoring, progression pathways, microaggression response and anti-racist supervision.

In parallel, the team will review existing pre-pilot evidence from 2024 to 2026 to form the baseline, so that the programme starts from authentic conditions and avoids repeating burdensome data

collection. A simple data protection and consent protocol will be agreed for all pilot sites, alongside a guidance note on safe facilitation, confidentiality and escalation routes for any concerns raised during sessions. Outputs from this phase include a short “you said, we will do” note, draft intervention designs with measurable indicators, and a participation plan that identifies how BGM staff will be involved across the year.

4.3 Site selection and onboarding (*October to November 2026*)

Following the September co-design conference, three to four pilot authorities will be selected to reflect variation in size, workforce profile and system readiness. Each pilot will confirm leadership sponsorship, identify a site lead, and agree local communications. A light readiness check will test for the minimum conditions to start, such as time for reflective sessions, access to routine HR and equality data, and a safe route for staff to give feedback.

Onboarding will set out a practical delivery schedule, including monthly reflective meetings, quarterly cross-site learning sets, and a simple cadence for data flows. Data sharing and information governance steps will be completed locally. The onboarding output is a site-specific delivery plan that names the interventions to be tested, the measures to be used, the support required, and the expectations for reporting and feedback. This creates feasibility and stability for piloting and avoids confusion about responsibilities.

4.4 Extended implementation cycle (*December 2026 to December 2027*)

This is the heart of the programme. Following co-design and onboarding, interventions are delivered and refined in live settings with relational support from the central team.

a. What will be delivered

- i. Mentoring and progression pathways: pilot mentor-match models, sponsor schemes and transparent progression routes; track take-up, match quality and movement along pathways.
- ii. Microaggression response: test a simple, credible response mechanism that clarifies reporting options, support offers and manager actions; monitor timeliness and staff confidence in the process.
- iii. Anti-racist supervision standards: agree a small set of standards and prompts for reflective supervision; use learning sets with supervisors to strengthen confidence and consistency.

b. How evidence will be collected

- i. Monthly reflective sessions at each site capture what is working, what is blocking progress and what adaptations are needed. Short field notes will record conditions such as leadership visibility, supervisor confidence and staff perceptions of safety.
- ii. Implementation fidelity checklists will be used periodically to compare intended and actual delivery of each intervention and to document reasons for deviation.
- iii. Pulse feedback from participating staff will run on a light schedule, for example quick surveys or short prompts at key moments, to avoid burden while keeping a live signal on trust, inclusion and confidence.
- iv. HR and equality data flows will be strengthened so that measures such as retention, progression and representation in key roles can be tracked more reliably over time.
- v. Cross-site learning sets will run quarterly to compare experiences, share practical fixes and agree any regional refinements to tools or guidance.
- vi. Adaptation logs will document changes made to interventions, who requested the change and what effect is expected, so that learning about transferability is explicit.

c. What will be measured

- i. Conditions for adoption: leadership sponsorship, time and space for reflective practice, clarity of local communications, and staff sense of safety.
- ii. Engagement and participation: mentoring take-up and completion, attendance at reflective sessions, and participation in feedback activities.
- iii. Experience indicators: confidence to raise concerns, quality of responses to microaggressions, credibility of progression processes and the perceived fairness of decisions.
- iv. Workforce indicators: where feasible and safe to do so, trends in retention, progression and representation will be reviewed alongside qualitative evidence to avoid over-claiming change where the time window is short.
The output from this phase is real-world evidence about what it takes to make interventions practical and sustainable, and a clear view of enabling conditions across different contexts.

4.5 Integrated evaluation (EFTI) (January to March 2028)

Evidence from the baseline, the implementation period and the endline will be synthesised and tested against four criteria: Effectiveness (what difference was observed for staff and teams), Feasibility (what it takes to run the work in normal conditions), Transferability (how well the approach

travels across different authorities) and Impact (the substantive change in trust, safety and workforce equity).

Analysis will combine cross-case themes with site-specific vignettes that show how context shaped results. Triangulation will compare qualitative accounts with HR and equality data where available. A short validation step with pilot sites will check the fit of the findings and refine final recommendations. The evaluation outputs will be a concise evidence report, an implementation readiness checklist and a summary of risks and mitigations for scale-up.

4.6 Final products and regional sharing (January to March 2028)

The programme will produce a Workforce Equity Toolkit that brings together practical guidance for mentoring and progression pathways, a clear microaggression response guide and prompts for anti-racist supervision. A simple workforce dashboard specification will be provided so authorities can track agreed measures using their own systems. Case examples will illustrate adoption conditions and common pitfalls, and a regional “you said, we did” event will share results, make commitments for next steps and offer space for staff to respond.

The focus is on region-ready, evidence-based resources that can be adopted without restarting the learning process locally. A brief support plan will set out how authorities can continue reflective sessions and data flows after the programme closes, so gains are maintained.

4.7 BGM Workstream Timeline from July 2026 onwards

Phase	Period	Delivery Focus	Outputs and Value
Engagement Reset and Co-Design	July to September 2026	In-person conference to rebuild trust; co-design interventions; establish shared ownership and safety	Addresses mistrust and creates buy-in for implementation
Site Selection and Onboarding	October to November 2026	Select 3 to 4 pilot authorities; confirm leadership sponsorship; agree HR data pathways and communications	Feasibility and stability for piloting
Extended Implementation Cycle	December 2026 to December 2027	Deliver mentoring, progression pathways, microaggression response and anti-racist supervision; relational support, site visits and ongoing data collection	Real-world evidence, deeper trust and a clear view of enabling conditions

Integrated Evaluation (EFTI)	January to March 2028	Evaluate against the four criteria using the full evidence arc	Evidence of impact on equity, retention, progression and psychological safety
Final Products and Regional Sharing	January to March 2028	Workforce Equity Toolkit, dashboard, case examples and a “you-said/we-did” event	Region-ready, evidence-based resources for authorities

5 Continuous Refinement and Knowledge Production

As with the QA workstream, the programme will produce learning notes, practical examples, targeted guidance, troubleshooting, cross-authority insights, evidence summaries and tool refinements. These will be updated throughout and feed into final regional products that are grounded in practice.

6 Staffing and Infrastructure Requirements

Delivery will be supported through the shared staffing and infrastructure profile set out below. This includes Senior Analyst capacity, oversight, technical support, and consultant support.

6.1 Resource profile and two-year funding (BGM-only allocation)

Delivery relies on the same combined capacity profile as the QA workstream: 0.45 FTE Senior Analyst capacity in 2026–27, increasing to 0.5 FTE in 2027–28, to carry out core research and evaluation deliverables along with implementation and data operations; consultant support to help coordinate with local authorities and support the co-design conference; 0.05 FTE oversight to ensure quality and strategic alignment; and 0.025 FTE technical support to build and maintain dashboards and support quantitative work.

Activity	Grade	2026-27 cost to KCC	2027-28 with 3% uplift	2026- 27 FTE required	2026-27 cost	2027-28 FTE required	2027-28 cost	Total two-year funding
Core research and evaluation deliverables	KSI entry	£63,317	£65,217	0.45	£28,493	0.5	£32,608	£61,101
Technical support	KSI mid	£66,959	£68,968	0.025	£1,674	0.025	£1,724	£3,398
Oversight	KSK mid	£88,284	£90,933	0.05	£4,414	0.05	£4,547	£8,961
Subtotal				0.525	£34,581	0.575	£38,879	£73,460
Consultant support & BGM conference	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£15,000	N/A	£15,000	£30,000
Total					£49,581		£53,879	£103,460

**Assuming mid-point of grade and in the Pension Scheme.*

Notes:

Per-year totals for BGM now include **£15,000** per year for consultant support and the BGM co-design conference, giving revised annual totals of **£49,581** and **£53,879** and a revised two-year total of **£103,460**.

7 Benefits to SESLIP and Local Authorities

The workstream produces workforce equity tools that are built with staff, not imposed on them; stronger HR and equality data; and a shared understanding of conditions that support inclusion, progression and safety. It focuses on practical change that can be maintained after the programme closes.

8 Conclusion

A two-year, implementation-centred BGM programme will enable authorities to deliver visible action, rebuild trust and put in place resources that can be sustained. With continuous learning and co-design at its core, the region can move from identifying inequities to embedding solutions that staff recognise and value.