This time last week we were all meeting at Great Places for the launch of Cohort Two of our BOOST programme and for our first Movement meeting involving our new Mentors, Mentees and Change Champions – doesn’t time fly!

I have attached the full Slide Deck, as promised.

So how did the day go?

In the morning we welcomed our new emerging allies and talked them through the aims and ethos of BOOST. We also introduced our new Lead, **John Bowker** who not only has followed Karen Mitchell into the CEO role at Southway, but has also stepped into her shoes with BOOST. It is great to welcome John – he was one of the Mentors in the pilot programme so is therefore the second of our Mentors at attain a CEO position in the lifetime of the programme. We look forward to the day when we can say that one of our Mentees has attained a CEO role 🤞We also welcomed **Roslyn Jayabalan**, our new KTP Associate, who will be helping guide and manage us through the BOOST project over the next two years.

We also confirmed the dates for the Movement Events over the year, which are

**Monday 25th November**

**Thursday 6th March**

**Tuesday 24th June**

And Graduation at MMU sometime **WC 15th September 2025**.

With our new cohort Julia talked through the background to BOOST and the role of **positive allyship**. We discussed BOOST’s story so far, including the work we have done on language and our adoption of the phase ‘**ethnically diverse colleagues’** and how this might evolve in the future. We also talked about networking, the work we have been doing within our organisations on inclusive recruitment and our identification of themes for leadership training which are now being developed into workshop sessions, which we will bring back to the movement meetings and then package up to roll out to each GMHP member organisation. These are

* Diverse Leadership: building cultural curiosity covering history, customs and lived experience of different races in the UK.
* Leading the sector: understanding of the issue of white leadership in housing and why it matters, within this using case studies of Grenfell and Awaab Ishak.
* Allyship: how to be a good ally
* Networks; how to have diverse networks to challenge and improve decision making
* Recruitment: how to be truly inclusive in your recruitment decisions

And for our emerging ethnically diverse leaders

* + Networking for success; how to link up with the people that matter inside and outside your organisation
  + Understanding self: understand your personal barriers to progression and how to overcome them
  + Diversity brings fresh perspectives: how to confidently share the value you bring with effective challenge

After a short break, we spent some time talking abut the role of the movement and BOOST Management Committee when **areas of concern, discord or conflict** arise. We have updated our process for dealing with any issues that arise, as attached. We also talked about risks and safety in terms of disclosing information and how this should be treated within the mentoring relationship.

The group then separated with the Mentors and Mentees talking through the **GROW Mentoring Model** and the Change Champions spending some time thinking about the organisational project for the next twelve months. They will bring this to each member organisations in-house BOOST Change Group.

In the afternoon, we welcomed Karen back to talk through the **Statement of Commitment** and then Jo Edwards talked to us about how the Riverside Group are bringing this to life through their **BOOST Strategy**, which the room felt was very inspiring!

We then entered our Workshop, led by John Bowker on the **Racially Motivated Civil Unrest** that took place over the Summer. He opened the session with some very powerful stats to bust the myths around who does and doesn’t get allocated Socially Housing in the UK. We then heard from our Mentees about the impact the events had on our ethnically diverse colleagues and communities and from our Mentors about how GMHP organisations responded as employers.

We then discussed

**Immediate reflections on what you’ve heard?**

* Our Mentees were brave; they were obviously uncomfortable talking about the situation, even to a room full of interested and supported people - how we can we foster truth-telling and make it safe and empowering?
* The events impacted on ethnically diverse people and communities in a very profound way  – they were triggering and undermined a sense of belonging, even for those who were born here. Hearing them talk about it was very powerful
* Several people in the room became quite tearful when hearing about a mentee’s experience of feeling unsafe in Britain for the first time (and how this feeling of unsafety was difficult to fight off in the days after the riots).
* It was concerning to hear that mentees wondered if their colleagues thought the same things as the rioters; who are their passive supporters and who can they trust?
* Most leaders and managers in the room felt their response was inadequate; they wanted to do the right thing but were not sure what it was
* The people making the decisions about how to respond, were not those that were impacted – most of us were slow to respond
* Some organisations closed offices but faced a backlash as they were deserting tenants/front line providers. Some chose not to close due to this conflict of interest.
* The Myth busting slides presented from John were very powerful and have the potential to be used in a campaign to address the misinformation circulating

**What can we learn from recent events and our response?**

* It is important to reach out to ethnically diverse staff to speak to them about how they are feeling, not wait for them to come to us or put out passive messaging about coming to us with any concerns. Do we really understand how they feel when events such as these happen? Not all will be impacted in the same way – it will dependent on previous experiences
* some organisations did group listening sessions; which were well received and enabled learning and growth for all
* ensure that we involved those experiencing the trauma are involved in response planning.
* We need to ensure that we don’t exaggerate the physical and psychological threat by dwelling on the negative side; one mentee reported that they only started to be fearful when others started to talk about it; as with violence against women, we need to avoid making people feel even more afraid about risk than is necessary.
* celebrate inter-racial friendship and promote multi-culturalism. This is an important counter weight for ethnically diverse colleagues who appreciated colleagues and tenants going out of their way to make it clear they did not agree with the riots or to actively work against them by attending marches/protests etc
* actively foster good multi-cultural relationships on an ongoing basis and have a means of bringing these to the foreground in times of crisis; the anti-racist movement need to swell as the racist movement swells. Highlight positive responses as they happen to help people feel safer and to encourage more positive actions.
* Invest in people management so that line managers are better equipped to respond. Use the riots as an example of a challenge in people management training, thereby embedding anti-racist thinking in people management skills.
* Acknowledge how these moments trigger other trauma, memories and fears. Match that with active and sensitive support. Ensure that employee assistance programmes include racist trauma counselling.

**What can we do better and more of?**

* Plan better, in the expectation of future unrest or crises around race relations.
* Integrate this into business continuity planning.
* Align and share this planning across GMHP and co-ordinate better. There may be physical resource on the ground that can be shared across HPs to respond in crises, as well as learning and shared comms etc.
* Counter harmful messages via myth busting. It is vital that we do that among our own staff as well as externally. If we are successful in doing it with tenants, they can be greater advocates of information to fight the disinformation in communities than we can be directly.
* Be more overtly non racists; Be more overt allies to our ethnically diverse communities
* Have clear policies to deal with racism from customers and be robust in our response

**How should we plan for a future crisis?**

* Align our approaches and support each other. It was noted that one of the positives was the sharing of internal comms by the HR teams
* Wider our contingency planning to events of this nature – it should not have been a surprise given the voting levels for right leaning groups in the election

**What can we do collectively as GMHP?**

* Collectively we need to foster good trusted relationships in our communities; We are not neutral. We are anti racist organisations and we should work together to campaign on this message. We have an obligation to counter the negatives and publicise the positives
* Educate our colleagues and customers about the allocation of housing; give them the knowledge and information to be influencers
* Lobby the NHF regarding communicating housing policy
* Learn together about what works and where

It was a powerful and though provoking session and we hope GMHP organisations will take the opportunity to run similar workshops within their organisations and keep the conversation live!

See you on Monday 25tth November ….