



Executive Summary: BOOST Evaluation 2026

The Problem BOOST is Addressing

The under-representation of ethnically diverse colleagues in the leadership of organisations is widespread, including in social housing (National Housing Federation, 2023; Greater Manchester Housing Providers, 2026). This matters because it suggests there are unfair barriers to progression and because ethnically diverse tenants are a substantial, and often under-served, community of social housing customers: they want to hear their needs represented through ethnically diverse leadership of the sector (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2025; Shelter, 2025).

The BOOST Programme

The BOOST Programme seeks to change social housing providers so that ethnically diverse leaders can emerge and thrive. It is built on a pilot project launched in 2019 by the Greater Manchester Housing Providers Partnership (GMHP), in response to the McCabe Report (2018). An evaluation recommended commissioning of an enhanced model (Rouse and Woolnough, 2021). BOOST was launched in March 2023 and has been run as a partnership between GMHP and Manchester Metropolitan University. It has operated as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership and been part-funded by Innovate UK. Since 2024, Aston University has also contributed. From September 2026, BOOST will be wholly funded by GMHP and its member organisations. Professor Julia Rouse remains as the programme's lead academic partner, on an independent basis.

The Programme Model

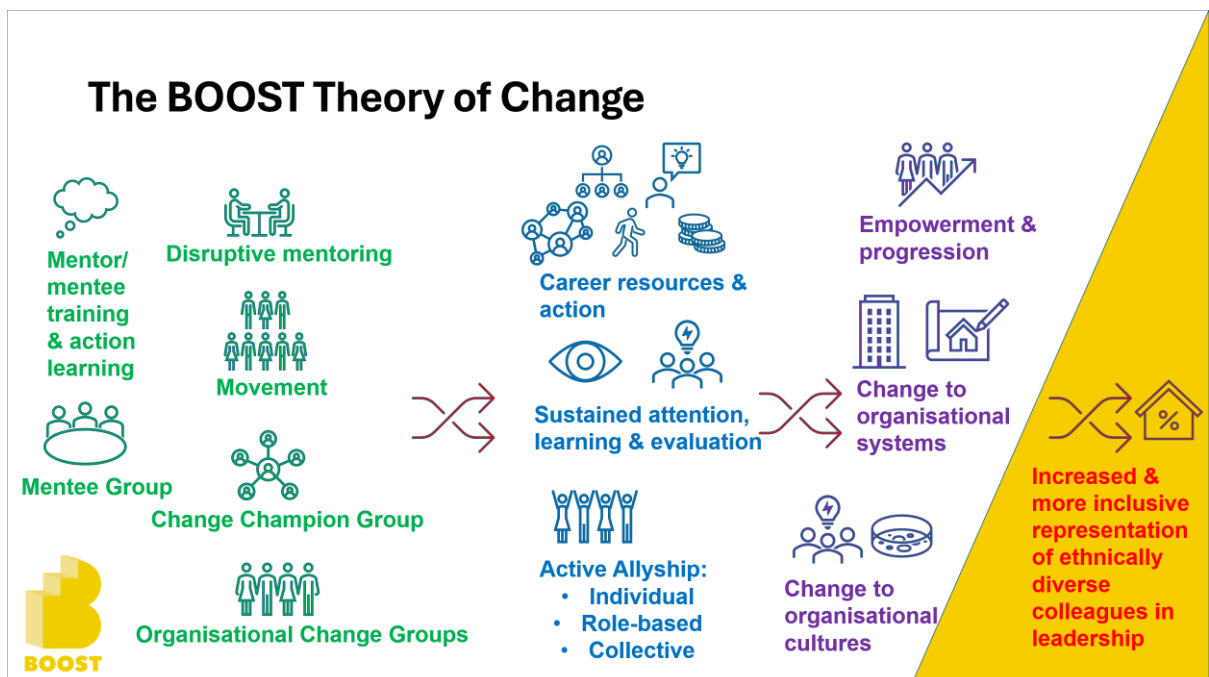
The aims of the BOOST programme are to:

1. Change the systems and culture of the social housing sector in Greater Manchester to enable ethnically diverse leaders to emerge and thrive.
2. Provide career mentoring to successive cohorts of ethnically diverse talent to develop a pipeline towards senior leadership.

The following slide summarises the core activities in BOOST:



The BOOST Theory of Change is outlined in the following slide:

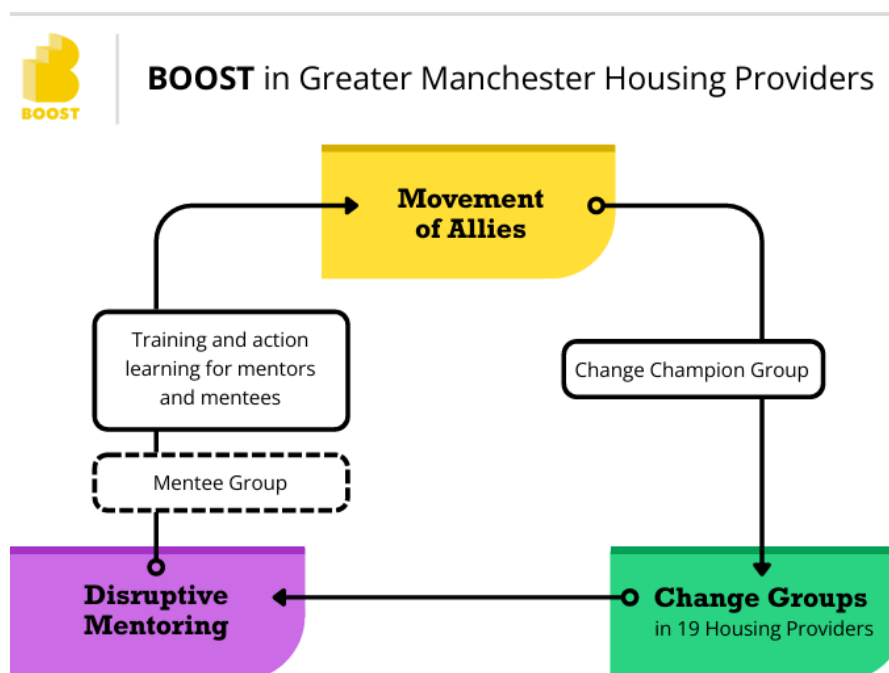


In summary, BOOST has an operational model (in green above) in which it fosters a Movement of Allies, a Disruptive Mentoring scheme, mentor and mentee training/action learning, a Mentee Group and Change Groups in each of 19 participating housing providers, led by Change Champions who are supported by a Change Champion Group. This operational system is designed to act as a symbiotic system that creates outcomes (in blue): new career resources and action for

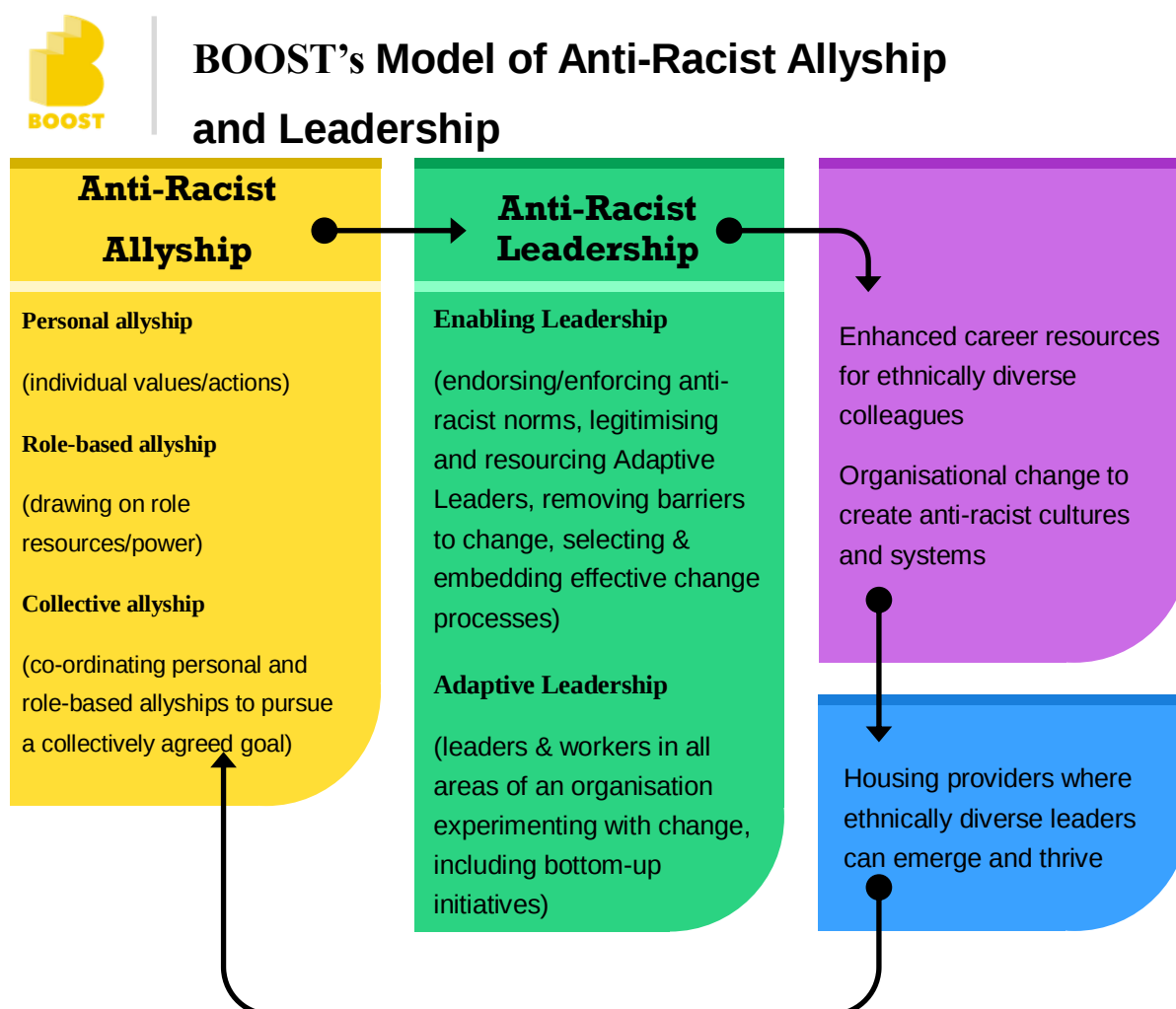
ethnically diverse mentees; sustained attention, learning and evaluation in GMHP about how to create anti-racist organisations that foster ethnically diverse leadership talent, and; active allyship, practised at the individual, role-based and collective levels. The model also seeks to harness allyship to develop Enabling and Adaptive Leadership to drive change (not shown on the slide). In turn, it is predicted that this will create the outputs (in purple) of empowerment and progression for ethnically diverse mentees and change to organisational systems and cultures. And that this will generate the outcome (in red) of increased and more inclusive representation of ethnically diverse colleagues in leadership.

The BOOST Movement of Allies aims is developing anti-racist organisations where ethnically diverse leaders can emerge and thrive. This has led them to act as a forum for GMHP to reflect on divisive racist events in our communities and generated joint anti-racist action from GMHP. Hence, the inclusion of this in BOOST's core activities. Ultimately, it is intended that fostering ethnically diverse talent will harness innovation for service improvement, particularly for ethnically diverse customers. So, this is also listed as one of BOOST's core activities.

BOOST's operational model is designed to be an interconnecting system, with a flow of learning and a rippling 'norm circle' endorsing anti-racist ideas and actions, as below:



BOOST's model relies on - and creates - Anti-Racist Allyship and Leadership:



More about the programme's operational model and the theory that underlays its approach to developing anti-racist organisations is available in the full report.

This Evaluation

This in-depth evaluation conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University in 2025-6 scrutinised each element of the BOOST programme model, 'lifting the bonnet' of what is happening in some areas (e.g. Disruptive Mentoring), identifying better practice models for operating each part of the programme system and proposing improvements. The evaluation also used reported on programme engagement and outcomes.

Key Evaluation Finding: Progression of Ethnically Diverse Leaders

Around half of the ethnically diverse mentees participating in the BOOST Disruptive Mentoring programme have progressed by securing an internal or external promotion or pay rise. Almost all of the other mentees either made a career change or reported better thriving within their existing role and/or a new career plan.

	Cohort 1 (14 mentees)	Cohort 2 (18 mentees)	Total (32 mentees)
Progressed	9*	6^	15
Left sector (probable progression)	0	1^	1
Became self-employed	2	0	2
Sideways move internally	1	2	3
Sideways move externally to GMHP member	0	1	1
Thriving (enhanced role &/or career plan)	2	6	8
No change (& no data on thriving)	0	2	2

*Cohort 1 progressions – 4 internal, 4 external to GMHP members, 1 out of sector

^Cohort 2 progressions – 4 internal, 2 external to GMHP members plus 1 probable progression out of sector

Note: Cohort 1 completed the programme in June 2024 while Cohort 2 completed in September 2025, so there has been a longer period of time for the mentees on Cohort 1 to secure a progression.

Ethnically diverse mentees also reported a range of other career outcomes including better confidence and wellbeing, learning about role structures and career pathways, raised awareness of transferable skills and how this opens up progression routes, having strategic career plans, increase in networks and networking ability, pursuing a strategically selected qualification and developing as a leader and ally.

Some mentees who did not progress are still frustrated, particularly if they struggled to engage their employer in their new career plan. A minority (particularly older women) reported hitting a confusing glass ceiling within their organisation.

Key Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Key Conclusion 1: There is good evidence for the overall effectiveness of the BOOST Model.

Core Recommendation 1: GMHP should continue to invest in operating the BOOST programme and – given the scale of the challenge they are addressing – plan for long-term investment.

Key Conclusion 2: Some aspects of the programme are operating more consistently than others, and all could be improved.

Core Recommendation 2: The BOOST Management Group should review all the detailed recommendations in the evaluation report and develop/track an action plan, in partnership with the GMHP CEO Group and BOOST Movement.

Core Recommendation 3: GMHP's CEO Group and Executive Teams should act more consistently as Enabling Leaders who endorse BOOST and both resource and expect engagement and change. The BOOST Management Group should provide timely data to support this.

Core Recommendation 4: The BOOST Management Group should draw on the model of the Mentee Group in Cohort 1 to facilitate future Mentee Groups. The BOOST Movement should consider how to facilitate a network of ethnically diverse leaders in GMHP, starting by fostering a network across the Mentee Groups.

Core Recommendation 5: The Executive Team in each BOOST member organisation should regularly review the actions and progress of their BOOST Change Group and use Enabling Leadership to endorse, resource and enable engagement and change.

Core Recommendation 6: The BOOST Management Group should review and improve its process of onboarding, developing and supporting Change Champions, the Change Champion Group and Change groups.

Key Conclusion 3: While there is consensus that the BOOST Model works as a system, outcomes could be improved if connections between key elements were strengthened.

Core Recommendation 7: The relationship between Disruptive Mentoring and the Change Groups should be improved by Change Champions onboarding mentors and mentees and facilitating their inclusion in Change Groups. BOOST should work through the Change Champion Group to share learning from the Movement about how to develop the safety needed for these Change Groups to act as sub-communities of the Movement, so that active listening and joint action can occur.

Key Conclusion 4: The BOOST Programme should consistently share the set of ideas that underpin its programme theory in BOOST events and resources so they can be deployed to power organisational change. These include a definition of anti-racism, theory about the causes of racism, its effects and the importance of

intersectionality sensibility and intersectional empathy, and what safety and allyship mean in practice. Also, how anti-racist change arises from (i) the practice of allyship – personal, role-based and collective – and Enabling and Active Leadership, and (ii) growing an anti-racist ‘norm circle’ from the the Movement, via Change Groups, to ripple in organisations.

Core recommendation 8: The BOOST Programme should consistently share its core ideas so that all Members can use them to drive change.

Key Conclusion 5: The BOOST Disruptive Mentoring programme has developed a highly effective model but it is developing relatively small numbers of ethnically diverse leaders, for a limited period of time. GMHP and each housing provider need to develop a broader pipeline strategy to support aspiring ethnically diverse leaders throughout their careers, drawing on learning from BOOST.

Core Recommendation 9: GMHP and its member organisations should work together and with BOOST to generate strategies to develop a pipeline of ethnically diverse leadership talent.

Core Recommendation 10: The BOOST Management Group should reflect on where it sees the programme fitting within broader pipeline strategies. They should also design policies regarding leave, return and repeated participation in BOOST.

Key Conclusion 6: The BOOST Movement has been a useful forum for GMHP to reflect on its response to racist community events and to develop joint or separate policies and responses. Reflection is now needed into how GMHP will work with partners to mount a broader and more pro-active anti-racist approach to community cohesion in Greater Manchester, and the role of BOOST in this.

Core Recommendation 11: BOOST should continue to include workshops that address the racist climate in communities, both at times of crisis and by sharing experiences of ‘everyday racism’.

Core Recommendation 12: GMHP should consider building on the BOOST Movement’s response to the racist crisis by investing in allied activity that steps forward more strongly to promote anti-racist norms and actions. A core challenge is to develop leaders to sustain their Enabling and Adaptive Anti-Racist Leadership under difficult political pressure. GMHP and BOOST could take a lead to create safe

space for reflection and build capacity among civic leaders and employers in Greater Manchester, harnessing a co-ordinated movement of organisations and leaders.

Key Conclusion 7: While there is consensus that it was appropriate that white leaders instigated BOOST and that it is largely (although fallibly) run with sensitivity to these power relations, it is clearly time to redress this balance and ensure that the mentee community takes a stronger role in leading BOOST.

Core Recommendation 13: The BOOST Management Group should develop a transition plan to increase the representation of ethnically diverse colleagues in the Management Group and in delivering the programme. GMHP employers should support this process by work loading and valuing this leadership activity.

Key Recommendation 8: BOOST has an effective model for changing organisations so that ethnically diverse leaders can emerge and thrive. It should develop a strategy for sharing with other organisations, in housing and beyond.

Core Recommendation 14: The BOOST Toolkit should be continuously updated and include a framework of better practice, drawing on this evaluation report. BOOST should draw on the Movement's networks and other key partnerships to share the model in social housing nationally, with Greater Manchester's civic leaders and its employers. BOOST should enter into learning exchange with any emerging programme spin-offs.

Key Recommendation 9: Building on this evaluation, the BOOST programme should develop its own internal approach to evaluation and monitoring.

Core Recommendation 15: The BOOST Management Group should build on this evaluation to develop a new monitoring and evaluation plan and ensure that member organisations have timely data and feedback on which to drive change.

To see the full evaluation report, learn more or contact BOOST see:

<https://gmhousing.co.uk/projects/boost-programme/>