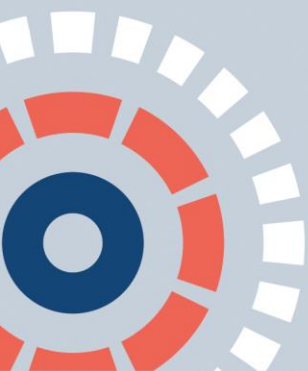


**The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)  
Manchester Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and NIHR  
Manchester Clinical Research Facility (CRF):  
Inclusive Research examples**



<b>Case Title</b>	Cultural Ambassadors (CAs) Programme: Promoting Fairness in Recruitment and Disciplinary Panels
<b>BRC Cluster(s)</b>	
<b>BRC Theme(s)</b>	
<b>Inclusive Research Element</b>	While primarily operational, the Cultural Ambassadors programme contributes to inclusive research environments by promoting fairness and reducing bias in recruitment and disciplinary processes. This helps ensure that diverse voices are represented and retained within research and clinical teams, indirectly supporting inclusive research delivery.
<b>Rationale for case study</b>	The programme was developed to address concerns about bias and inequity in recruitment and disciplinary procedures, particularly affecting staff from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds. The case study illustrates how structured interventions can improve fairness, trust, and inclusion within healthcare organisations.
<b>Background</b>	Prior to the programme, there were concerns about unconscious bias and inconsistent practices in recruitment and disciplinary panels. Staff from ethnic minority backgrounds were disproportionately affected, and there was a lack of structured support to ensure fairness in decision-making processes.
<b>What we did</b>	Staff volunteers received training to become CAs so they could participate in the recruitment panels for senior roles (band 8a and above) and disciplinary hearings that might lead to dismissal. The majority of CA expressed satisfaction with the training they received. However, some reported that the training felt rushed, leading to confusion about their role and responsibilities. As a result, newly trained Ambassadors often faced challenges such as unclear expectations, limited support, and time constraints, which hindered their ability to fully engage with the programme. This contributed to lower participation rates—of the 88 individuals who completed training, only 46 went on to take part in at least one recruitment or disciplinary panel.





<p><b>What the outcome(s) is/are</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 46 trained CAs participated in at least one panel, completing 60% of panel requests.</li> <li>• 100% of feedback praised the CAs' contributions. Increased awareness of unconscious bias among panel members.</li> <li>• Improved fairness in decision-making and greater staff confidence in formal processes.</li> <li>• Beneficiaries include underrepresented staff and candidates, as well as the wider organisation through enhanced inclusion practices.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusions</b></p>	
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue refining training to ensure clarity and confidence in the CA role.</li> <li>• Expand the programme to meet growing demand.</li> <li>• Provide ongoing support and recognition to maintain CA engagement.</li> <li>• Promote awareness of the CA role across the organisation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Future work</b></p>	<p>To accelerate the effectiveness of CA programme, a number of important measures will be implemented. Initially, the training will be restructured to offer clearer role expectations. Second, the programme needs to grow, with more active ambassadors available to meet rising demand—particularly for recruitment and disciplinary panels. Improved systems are also necessary for managing requests, better communication and gathering timely feedback to assess programme's impact.</p> <p>Increasing awareness and understanding of the CA role throughout the organisation is equally essential. Managers and panel chairs require guidance on how to engage CA effectively and consistently. Finally, routine data collection is important to evaluate where ambassadors are needed most and whether the programme is improving fairness for underrepresented employees.</p> <p>Barriers to these next steps consist of restricted staff time, absence of dedicated time for the CA position, and lack of support from line managers. There is also a possibility that ambassadors may feel unappreciated and disengage from the role, without proper recognition.</p> <p>The NIHR can assist in this process by aiding in the funding for enhanced training development and implementation, and offering evaluation expertise. Continued collaboration with NIHR will help build a stronger evidence base to show the programme's long-term value and guide future improvements. With the right support, the CA programme has strong potential to promote fairness, inclusion, and real culture change across the NCA.</p>

Date last updated:

