

# H.O.P.E. Black & Racialised Leaders Programme (Cohort 4) Impact Report



Evaluation Partner: onEvidence Ltd.

Report Authors: Paul Morris, Roxanne Khan.

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# Foreword

*By Meena Kumari, Founder of H.O.P.E.*

It gives me great pride to introduce the impact report for Cohort 4 of the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme. Each year, this initiative grows in strength, confidence, and reach – and this latest cohort marks another important step in our collective journey towards equity, representation, and justice within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector.

In November 2025, twenty-one participants joined the programme, representing organisations from across the country: from SafeLives in Bristol to Rape Crisis England & Wales, GALOP, WAITS, and many others. Their breadth of experience reflects the richness and diversity of the communities we serve. It also reminds us how urgently the sector needs leadership that is inclusive, culturally competent, and truly representative.

This urgency is not new. The foundations of this work were laid five years ago, when research led by Dr Olumide Adisa and Dr Katherine Allen (*Adisa et al.*, 2020) at the University of Suffolk highlighted a vital truth: the VAWG sector remains unrepresentative of the communities it serves, creating barriers to effective, accessible responses for both survivors and perpetrators. It made clear that meaningful change required not only evidence, but a deliberate investment in the people whose leadership has too often been overlooked.

The H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme was created in response to long-standing inequities faced by Black and Racialised professionals: barriers to progression, limited access to leadership pathways, and the emotional labour of navigating systems not designed with them in mind. Cohort 4 continues this mission with intention and care, offering a space where participants can strengthen their skills, challenge structural inequities, and build the networks that sustain long-term leadership.

I am deeply grateful to our funders, including City Bridge Trust and MOPAC, whose commitment ensures that this work not only continues but evolves. My thanks also go to the dedicated H.O.P.E. team and associates, whose expertise and compassion shape a programme that is both rigorous and deeply human.

Most importantly, I want to honour the courage, brilliance, and determination of our participants. By stepping into this journey, you are investing in your own growth – but you are also reshaping the future of the VAWG sector. Your leadership will help build organisations that reflect the diversity, resilience, and strength of the communities most affected by violence and inequality.

This report captures the impact of Cohort 4 so far, but it is also a promise of what is yet to come. You are only at the beginning of your leadership journey, and we look forward to witnessing the transformation you will bring to the sector in the years ahead.

## Executive Summary

The H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme was established in 2022 to dismantle the systemic barriers facing Black and racialised professionals within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector. By focusing on increasing leadership diversity, improving staff retention, and strengthening professional networks, the 12-week programme provides a dedicated pathway for staff to develop strategic leadership capacity. This report evaluates the impact of Cohort 4, delivered between November 2025 and January 2026, using a comparative analysis of pre- and post-programme data to examine shifts in conceptual understanding and leadership identity.

The evaluation demonstrates a marked progression in both technical proficiency and professional confidence among the cohort. Participants moved from a baseline characterised by frequent imposter syndrome and notable gaps in understanding leadership models and funding streams to a self-reported sense of being “equipped” and “grounded.” There was a near-universal increase in participants’ confidence in navigating senior management structures and advocating for strategic outcomes. These findings suggest that the programme helped address the professional marginalisation often experienced by racialised staff, supporting the development of a more resilient and validated leadership identity.

A central component of this impact was the creation of safe spaces that enabled participants to share and validate their workplace experiences alongside minoritised peers. This networking element reduced feelings of professional isolation and provided a structured environment for discussing complex issues such as racial trauma and microaggressions. High levels of satisfaction were reflected in strong facilitator ratings and a unanimous recommendation rate. While the programme proved effective in its current format, participants identified opportunities for refinement, including increased in-person engagement, a more structured funding module, and additional practical workplace scenarios. Overall, the findings indicate that Cohort 4 gained the conceptual clarity and institutional confidence needed to contribute to a more equitable leadership landscape within the VAWG sector.

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# 1. Background and Context

The Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector operates within a landscape marked by persistent inequities in representation, leadership, and resource distribution. While there is no single national dataset capturing the demographic profile of the VAWG workforce, a consistent body of evidence demonstrates that Black and minoritised women remain under-represented in leadership roles, face systemic barriers to progression, and are disproportionately excluded from decision-making structures (Imkaan, 2020).

Specialist “by and for” organisations, led by and for Black, minoritised, and other marginalised groups, play a critical role in delivering culturally responsive, trauma-informed support. Yet multiple national reviews have found that these organisations remain structurally underfunded, under-resourced, and unable to meet demand at a scale proportionate to the communities they serve (EVAW, 2024; Domestic Abuse Commissioner, 2023). Analysis of the VAWG funding ecosystem has similarly highlighted how funding flows systematically disadvantage Black-led and minoritised-led services, constraining their capacity and long-term sustainability (Adisa *et al.*, 2020). This funding inequity directly affects representation: when Black-led and minoritised-led services struggle to survive, the sector’s leadership pipeline narrows.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner’s 2023 mapping report highlighted that survivors from racialised communities face significant barriers to accessing appropriate support, including a lack of culturally competent provision and limited availability of specialist services (DAC, 2023). Women’s Aid’s annual audits similarly show that demand for specialist services for Black and minoritised women consistently exceeds capacity, with many areas lacking any dedicated provision at all (Women’s Aid, 2023). These gaps in service availability reflect, and reinforce, the wider under-representation of racialised professionals within the sector’s workforce and leadership.

Alongside structural barriers, racialised staff report experiences of racism, microaggressions, and isolation within VAWG organisations, contributing to limited progression opportunities and higher turnover (Thiara & Roy, 2020). Qualitative studies across the wider social care and health sectors echo these patterns, documenting the emotional labour and professional marginalisation experienced by Black and minoritised women in frontline and leadership roles (WRES, 2023). Although these studies are not VAWG-specific, they provide relevant context given the sector’s close operational alignment with health, policing, and social care.

In response to these systemic inequities, the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme was commissioned in 2022 by the Drive Partnership to support Black and Racialised staff working in the VAWG sector. Now entering its fourth cohort, the programme provides a structured, supportive environment for participants to develop leadership skills, strengthen networks, and challenge organisational and sector-wide barriers. Its purpose is not only to improve retention and progression, but to contribute to a more

representative and culturally competent leadership landscape; one that reflects the diversity of the communities most affected by VAWG.

As the government continues to set ambitious targets for reducing VAWG, the sector's ability to meet these goals depends on a workforce and leadership structure that is equitable, diverse, and reflective of lived experience. Cohort 4 of the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme forms part of this wider transformation, building capacity and resilience among those who will shape the sector's future.

## 2. H.O.P.E Leadership Programme

Building on this wider context, the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme provides a structured, research-informed pathway for Black and racialised staff to develop their leadership capacity within the VAWG sector. Established in 2022 and now in its fourth cohort, the programme offers a dedicated space for participants to strengthen their skills, build confidence, and navigate the structural barriers that have historically limited progression. This report focuses on Cohort 4, delivered between November 2025 and January 2026.

### 2.1 Core Objectives

The programme is built around four core objectives that reflect both sector needs and the lived experiences of racialised staff:

- **Increase diversity in leadership:** Supporting racialised professionals to enter, remain in, and progress within leadership roles.
- **Improve retention:** Reducing isolation and strengthening belonging to encourage long-term commitment to the sector.
- **Develop skills:** Providing practical tools, theoretical frameworks, and reflective space for effective leadership.
- **Provide networking opportunities:** Creating a peer community that fosters collaboration, solidarity, and shared learning.

### 2.2 Programme Structure and Delivery

H.O.P.E. is delivered as a 12-week, 36-hour leadership programme designed specifically for Black and racialised staff working in the VAWG sector. Cohort 4 followed a hybrid model, combining:

- **3 in-person sessions** held in London (near King's Cross/Euston)
- **9 remote sessions** delivered via Zoom
- **2 free one-to-one coaching sessions** for each participant

The programme is structured to help participants build in-demand leadership skills quickly, recognise the strengths they already hold, and apply effective practice within their organisations. Cohort 4 included a range of accessibility considerations, with

tailored support provided for a Deaf/BSL user, a participant with dyslexia, and a participant requesting ADHD-related adjustments.

## 2.3 Eligibility and Participation

The programme is open to Black and racialised staff working in organisations addressing the VAWG agenda, including domestic abuse services, sexual violence services, housing, policing, probation, youth work, social care, the NHS, and specialist “by and for” organisations. Applicants must have completed any required probation period, commit to attending all sessions, and participate in an end-of-programme showcase event.

A total of twenty-one participants joined Cohort 4, eighteen of whom completed the programme, representing a diverse range of roles, organisations, and lived experiences across the sector.

## 2.4 Funding and Organisational Support

Cohort 4 was supported through a combination of organisational investment and bursary funding. Several employers funded places directly, while City Bridge Foundation provided up to twelve funded spaces for staff from “by and for” organisations or smaller services requiring financial support. Additional bursary support from MOPAC enabled smaller “by and for” organisations to participate, contributing to the programme’s largest representation of these services to date. This blended model ensured equitable access and reflects both individual commitment and wider sector recognition of the need to invest in racialised leadership.

## 2.5 Methodology of Assessment

The impact analysis in this report draws on comparative data from the pre-programme evaluation (October–November 2025) and the post-programme assessment (January 2026). This approach enables a clear examination of how the programme supported Cohort 4 in relation to its four core objectives and the needs participants identified at the outset.

# 3. Target outcomes

The H.O.P.E Leadership Programme aims to achieve several key outcomes related to leadership development and equity within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector. These target outcomes are designed to address the systemic barriers faced by Black and Racialised staff.

The primary objectives of the H.O.P.E Leadership Programme are:

- **Increase diversity in leadership:** The programme seeks to address the underrepresentation of racialised individuals in leadership positions within the VAWG sector. By equipping participants with the necessary skills and confidence, the programme aims to empower them to take on leadership roles and contribute to a more diverse leadership landscape.

- **Improve retention of racialised staff:** The programme acknowledges that many racialised staff members feel unsupported, isolated, and frustrated, leading some to consider leaving the VAWG sector. By providing a supportive environment, developing skills, and creating networking opportunities, the programme aims to foster a sense of belonging and encourage these professionals to remain in the sector.
- **Develop leadership skills:** Participants have identified various leadership skills they want to develop, including goal-setting, planning, decisiveness, communication, motivation, delegation, conflict management, dependability, team building, and integrity. Participants also want to develop their understanding of leadership models, workplace psychology, and issues of racial trauma and microaggressions. The programme aims to enhance these skills and provide participants with practical tools and frameworks to lead effectively.
- **Provide networking opportunities:** The programme aims to facilitate connections between racialised professionals, creating a supportive network of peers who share similar challenges and aspirations. This networking component is intended to provide ongoing support and collaboration opportunities for participants, both during the programme and beyond.

In addition to these core objectives, the programme aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Empower individuals to use their voices:** Participants want to feel empowered to express their views in their workplaces, including with senior staff and management. They aim to develop the ability to navigate difficult conversations, challenge unhelpful behaviours, and advocate for change.
- **Build confidence:** Participants seek to increase their confidence in their abilities, their work, and in future positions within the sector. Many participants report feeling a lack of confidence, and hope the programme will help to address this.
- **Address the impact of racism and discrimination in the workplace:** Participants have expressed a need for a safe space to address racism, discrimination, and racial trauma. The programme seeks to help them develop resilience, advocate for an inclusive workplace, and address microaggressions.
- **Enhance understanding of workplace psychology:** Participants are seeking to understand how psychology can improve the workplace and enable them to recognise effective leadership.
- **Improve understanding of funding streams within the VAWG sector:** Many participants have expressed a desire to better understand how to navigate funding streams in the VAWG sector.
- **Create more positive and inclusive work environments:** Participants want to create more equitable and inclusive work environments for themselves and their colleagues.

By achieving these target outcomes, the H.O.P.E Leadership Programme aims to make a significant contribution to transforming the VAWG sector, creating more equitable, diverse, and effective services to combat violence against women and girls.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Initial Assessment of Participant Knowledge and Aspirations

The pre-programme evaluation for Cohort 4, conducted between 21 October and 5 November 2025, establishes a clear baseline of participants' perspectives, confidence levels, and development goals before beginning the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme. Using a mix of multiple-choice and open-text questions, the assessment highlights both existing strengths and areas where participants sought deeper support.

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*“I feel it will make me a stronger leader in my organisation... I want to build more confidence in how I lead and communicate, especially when it comes to challenging things that don't sit right, like microaggressions or power imbalances.”*

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#### 4.1.1 Participant demographics and initial feedback

Cohort 4 brings together 18 professionals (who completed) from across the VAWG sector, representing a wide range of identities, lived experiences, and organisational roles. The demographic profile reflects the programme's commitment to supporting racialised leaders and ensuring diverse representation across age, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

- **Age and Gender:** The cohort's age range spans from 22 to 47 years, with an average age of 36 years. In terms of gender, the group is predominantly female, with 14 out of 15 respondents identifying as such.
- **Ethnicity:** The cohort reflects a rich and diverse mix of ethnic backgrounds, which is central to the programme's mission of supporting minoritised leaders. This includes individuals identifying as Black, Black British, Caribbean or African (3); Mixed or multiple ethnic groups (3); Asian or Asian British (2); Indian (2); and White and Black Caribbean (2), among others.
- **Sexual Orientation:** Of those who provided data, the majority identify as heterosexual or straight (12), while the cohort also includes individuals identifying as bisexual (2) and queer (1).

### 4.1.2 Geography and Accessibility

The geographical spread of the cohort shows a strong presence in London, where 13 participants are based. However, the programme maintains a national reach with representation from Bristol (2), Surrey (1), and Leeds (1).

To facilitate the 12-week remote learning journey, 14 participants confirmed they have consistent access to Zoom and a quiet learning space. The programme is committed to inclusive learning, with four participants noting specific accessibility requirements: one Deaf/BSL user, one participant with dyslexia, and another requesting support related to ADHD.

### 4.1.3 Funding and Organisational Support

A significant finding from the initial data is the high demand for financial assistance to access leadership training. The majority of the cohort (76%) are participating via bursary spaces. The remaining four participants are being funded directly by their organisations, demonstrating a commitment from some sector employers to invest in the progression of their Black and racialised staff.

Feedback regarding the initial engagement with H.O.P.E. was very positive:

- **Booking Process:** The evaluation confirmed the process was straightforward, with 50% agreeing and 39% strongly agreeing (89% total) that booking was easy.
- **Communication:** Participants reported high satisfaction with communication from H.O.P.E., with 39% agreeing and 50% strongly agreeing that it has been easy.

### 4.1.4 Understanding of key concepts

Participants entered the programme with varied levels of confidence across core leadership and racial justice concepts. The pre-programme responses reveal strong foundations in areas such as microaggressions and racial gaslighting, alongside clear development needs in leadership models, funding processes, and aspects of workplace psychology.

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*“I hope to gain insight and understanding about being a woman of colour in the workplace and build my confidence and resilience to serve my development and professional success.”*

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- **Microaggressions and racial gaslighting:** This was the area of highest initial confidence, with 89% of participants (72% agree and 17% strongly agree) reporting a good understanding.
- **Racial trauma, tokenism, and self-confidence:** A majority of 62% (56% agree and 6% strongly agree) felt they understood these concepts, though 33% remained neutral.

- **Personality types and resilience:** While 67% agreed they had a good understanding, 0% strongly agreed, and 11% disagreed, indicating room for deeper exploration.
- **Using voice and senior management:** 62% (56% agree and 6% strongly agree) felt they could effectively get information across to senior managers, while 33% were unsure.
- **Psychology of the workplace:** Participants were divided, with 50% agreeing or strongly agreeing they had a good understanding, while 44% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- **Leadership models and styles:** A clear gap was identified here; only 39% (33% agree and 6% strongly agree) felt they had a good understanding, while 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- **Difficult conversations:** While 56% agreed they could have difficult conversations with managers, 0% strongly agreed, and 11% disagreed.
- **Effective supervision and burnout:** Half the cohort (50%) felt they understood how to prevent burnout, but 44% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- **Navigating funding streams:** This remains the area of least confidence, with 56% of participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (28% each) that they have a good understanding of funding.

#### 4.1.5 Anticipated personal changes and expectations

Participants articulated a set of personal and professional aspirations for the programme, ranging from overcoming imposter syndrome to strengthening strategic thinking and advocacy skills. Many also expressed a desire to build lasting networks with other racialised leaders across the sector.

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*“I lack confidence and always suffer from imposter syndrome. This course will help me improve my self-confidence and trust my judgements. It will also equip me to advocate better for myself and others.”*

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- **Overcoming Imposter Syndrome:** Multiple participants cited a desire to trust their judgements and move past feelings of being "incompetent" or an "imposter," particularly as recent graduates or those new to the sector.
- **Strategic and Strategic Outcomes:** There is a strong desire to learn how to think more strategically and achieve better outcomes for solutions within the VAWG sector.
- **Advocacy and Calling Out Behaviour:** Participants hope to gain the courage and skills to "call out" microaggressions and advocate more effectively for themselves and survivors.
- **Building Networks:** Many highlighted the importance of creating a lasting network of racialised leaders for mutual support and inspiration.

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*“I would like to deepen my awareness of Black racialised leaders and explore ways to integrate this understanding into our daily conversations and practices to help create more inclusive spaces.”*

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#### **4.1.6 Communication and overall anticipation**

Early engagement with H.O.P.E. was viewed positively, with participants noting strong communication and expressing enthusiasm for the programme ahead. While excitement and optimism were common themes, some participants also acknowledged feelings of nervousness as they prepared for the 12-week journey.

- **Communication Improvements:** Most found communication excellent, though some suggested a meeting before the programme began or more information on navigating the portal.
- **100% Anticipation:** All participants (100%) stated they are looking forward to the next 12 weeks.
- **Emotional Readiness:** Participants described their feelings as a mix of being "super duper excited," "optimistic," and "hopeful," alongside some feeling "anxious" or "nervous" about the journey ahead.

#### **4.1.7 Summary**

Cohort 4 begins the programme with high motivation and a clear commitment to developing their leadership capacity. While participants demonstrate strong awareness of racialised workplace dynamics, the pre-programme assessment identifies notable gaps in leadership models and funding knowledge. These findings highlight the programme's role in supporting racialised professionals to progress into more strategic and influential positions within the sector.

## **4.2 Post-Programme Assessment of Participant Knowledge and Aspirations**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

The post-programme evaluation provides a snapshot of participants' knowledge, confidence, and aspirations at the end of the 12-week course. As an immediate post-programme assessment, it reflects participants' self-reported experiences at the point of completion rather than long-term or sustained impact. The findings offer a factual basis for comparing pre- and post-programme responses and identifying early indications of change across the cohort.

- **Timing:** The post-programme evaluation was conducted between 27 and 30 January 2026.
- **Response rate:** There were 14 respondents to the post-programme survey.

- **Method:** The post-programme survey mirrored the pre-programme poll to allow direct comparison.

#### 4.2.2 Quantitative shift in conceptual understanding

Participants reported clear changes in their understanding of core leadership concepts by the end of the programme. The data shows movement across several areas, reflecting how participants rated their knowledge after completing the course compared with their starting point.

- **Leadership Models and Styles:** Post-programme, 100% of participants agree or strongly agree they have a good understanding of leadership models (43% agree; 57% strongly agree), compared with 39% who agreed or strongly agreed before the programme.
- **Navigating Funding Streams:** In the post-programme survey, 64% of participants agree they understand funding processes. Disagreement in this area decreased from 56% pre-programme to 7% post-programme.
- **Psychology of the Workplace and Racial Trauma:** 71% of participants now *strongly agree* they have a good understanding of workplace psychology, racial trauma, and related concepts.
- **Difficult Conversations and Supervision:** Post-programme data shows that 86% of participants feel equipped to have difficult conversations and engage in supervision (50% strongly agree; 36% agree).

#### 4.2.3 Personal growth and professional identity

Participants also reflected on how the programme shaped their sense of confidence, identity, and professional presence. Their open-text responses reveal how the learning environment and peer connections contributed to shifts in self-perception and personal development.

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*“Enrolling on this programme itself required me to have some confidence... I was already feeling a little incompetent at work, sometimes feeling like I’m not doing anything at all... I was worried there’d be people with significantly more experience than me and would therefore think I’m incompetent. Despite their years of experience, course mates have been friendly, open and encouraging... Since being part of the programme, I truly feel that I am a more confident person... I have found more courage to speak up.”*

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- **Overcoming Imposter Syndrome:** Participants described a shift in self-perception, moving away from earlier feelings of being “incompetent” or “feeling like I’m not doing anything at all.” One respondent noted that although they initially worried colleagues with more experience would “think I’m

incompetent,” they now “truly feel that I am a more confident person” and have found “more courage to speak up.”

- **Validation and Safe Spaces:** Feedback highlighted the value of connecting with “racially minoritised colleagues from other organisations to share experiences, insights and challenges in a safe space.” Participants reported that being able to “discuss the reality that comes from being a person of colour in a predominantly white workplace” felt “really validating and encouraging” and helped them feel “heard and seen.”
- **Self-Awareness and Resilience:** Quantitative data shows that 100% of participants now agree or strongly agree (57% agree; 43% strongly agree) that they have a good understanding of “personality types, emotional intelligence and how to build effective resilience.” Qualitative reflections reinforce this, with participants noting they have “learnt to be more aware of my own strengths and skills” and are better at “understanding myself better and translating those skills to leadership.”

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*“It has been helpful to meet and engage with racially minoritised colleagues from other organisations to share experiences, insights and challenges in a safe space, and be able to discuss the reality that comes from being a person of colour in a predominantly white workplace. Lots of the discussions have felt really validating and encouraging, and have helped my confidence.”*

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#### **4.2.4 Evolution of voice and strategic aspirations**

Alongside personal growth, participants described how they intend to use their learning in practice. Their reflections point to growing confidence in communication, leadership behaviours, and strategic engagement within their organisations and the wider sector.

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*“It has helped me gain confidence and understand how to use my voice to ask for what I want and feel grounded. It has also given me insight on how different communication styles are needed for different people. It has helped me feel validated and heard and seen.”*

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- **Using Voice with Senior Management:** Post-programme data indicates that 100% of participants feel able to use their voice in projects and communicate effectively with senior managers and teams (57% agree; 43% strongly agree). One participant noted that the course helped them “understand how to use my voice to ask for what I want.”

- **Calling Out Behaviour:** Participants described a strengthened resolve to lead with “courage” and “groundedness” when addressing workplace dynamics, including the confidence to “challenge microaggressions” and navigate power imbalances. One respondent shared that they now have “more courage to speak up” about their professional experiences.
- **Network Building:** Participants used terms such as “equipped,” “diverse,” “collaborative,” and “within reach” to describe how they currently view leadership. Qualitative feedback also emphasised an intention to be “stronger together” as leaders when tackling challenges within the sector.

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*“Hearing about others’ experiences and challenges as being a person of colour in leadership roles... the importance of being stronger together has been reiterated as the way to truly tackle VAWG, and us leaders learning from one another is vital as we can take each other’s experiences and take learnings into our own practice going forwards.”*

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#### 4.2.5 Programme delivery and satisfaction levels

Participants also identified areas where future cohorts might benefit from additional structure or practical emphasis. Their suggestions focus on strengthening applied learning and enhancing the programme’s delivery format.

- **Facilitator Performance:** The trainers and guest speakers received an average score of 4.8 out of 5, with 79% of participants awarding a top rating of 5.
- **Communication Ease:** 86% of participants strongly agreed that communication with H.O.P.E. was easy, compared with **50%** who strongly agreed in the pre-programme poll.
- **Recommendation Rate:** 100% of participants stated they would recommend the programme to a colleague.

#### 4.2.6 Participant suggestions for future development

Participants also offered suggestions for strengthening future programme delivery, identifying several areas where additional structure or practical emphasis could enhance the learning experience.

- **More workplace scenarios and practical application:** Participants suggested including “more practical practice on communicating” and “navigating difficult common work experiences,” with specific requests for “some workplace scenarios to discuss on how to navigate.”
- **More in-person time:** Some participants noted they “would have appreciated more in person time in the programme.”

- **A more structured approach to the funding module:** One respondent suggested that “the funding part of the training could be improved to come more structured.”

#### **4.2.7 Summary**

The post-programme assessment for Cohort 4 shows clear shifts in knowledge, confidence, and professional outlook across the core areas of the H.O.P.E. Leadership Programme. Quantitative results indicate substantial increases in conceptual understanding, with knowledge of leadership models rising from 39% to 100% agreement and confidence in navigating funding streams reaching 64%. Participants also reported a strengthened sense of professional identity, describing movement away from feeling “incompetent” towards greater confidence supported by validation within safe spaces.

Across the cohort, 100% of respondents felt able to use their voice with senior management, and the average leadership self-assessment score was 6.1 out of 10. Satisfaction with programme delivery was consistently high, reflected in a 4.8/5 facilitator rating and a 100% recommendation rate. Participants described themselves as “equipped,” “grounded,” and increasingly collaborative, while suggesting enhancements such as more workplace scenarios, additional in-person time, and a more structured funding module for future cohorts.

## **5. Conclusion**

The evaluation of Cohort 4 indicates a clear progression from foundational awareness to a more confident and strategic leadership identity. While participants entered the programme with strong baseline understanding of issues such as microaggressions and racial gaslighting, the growth in navigating leadership frameworks, workplace psychology, and organisational power structures suggests the programme helped bridge a critical gap between frontline experience and strategic readiness. This shift is reflected in participants’ movement from feelings of professional isolation and imposter syndrome toward a collective sense of being “equipped” and “grounded.” By providing a validated space for racialised peers to share workplace realities, the programme contributed to a strengthened professional identity that aligns closely with its core objectives of developing leadership skills and increasing diversity in representation.

Across the cohort, the pattern of feedback highlights the programme’s dual role as both a technical learning environment and a community of practice. Increased confidence in using voice with senior management, alongside improved understanding of complex areas such as funding processes, points to a reduction in the professional marginalisation often experienced by racialised staff. Participant suggestions for more workplace scenarios and structured in-person engagement offer clear, actionable pathways for refining future delivery. The combination of a high recommendation rate and strengthened self-assessment scores highlights the importance of continued investment in racialised leadership development, helping to build a resilient and diverse leadership pipeline equipped to challenge systemic barriers within the VAWG sector.

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**AUTHORS**  
**PAUL MORRIS**  
**ROXANNE KHAN**  
**CONSULTANTS**

[WWW.ONEVIDENCE.CO.UK](http://WWW.ONEVIDENCE.CO.UK)



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**H.O.P.E TRAINING AND CONSULTANCY**

[WWW.HOPETRAINING.CO.UK](http://WWW.HOPETRAINING.CO.UK)

[ADMIN@HOPETRAINING.CO.UK](mailto:ADMIN@HOPETRAINING.CO.UK)