Honouring Our Communities in The East & Beyond.

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I can hardly believe it is already October. It has been a busy but fantastic period in the East. Across 11 Local Authorities, together we have made strides towards actualising our collective vision: *a racially just and equitable society in the Eastern Region where everyone is valued and respected*.

Colleagues will know that I am very passionate about maintaining the precision of marking Black History. Oftentimes, the original purpose of Black History recognition can be compressed, to *solely* addressing racism. I offer challenge here that this can inadvertently frame the identity of Black people *only* within narratives about race and racism. We are more than racism, we did not create it.

We must look back to look forward, to which we will re-affirm our standing: we have a rich, vibrant, powerful history and heritage that has shaped global history.

Whilst I believe that our identities are should not be flattened into 31 days, I see the benefit of having a focused month. This year's theme, *Honouring Our Communities,* invites us to reflect upon the communities that both shape and sustain us. Geography helps us to mark places, but relationships help us to focus on people. People and relationships.

Across the Eastern Region, Black African and Caribbean children, families, practitioners, carers, educators, community leaders and partners make an immeasurable contribution to our public services and neighbourhoods. Their knowledge, creativity, resilience and lived experience strengthen the way we support Children and Families.

For me, honouring our communities means celebrating Black history, excellence and achievement. Our communities are not passive recipients of services. They hold expertise, relationships and solutions. When we work *alongside* Black children, families and community organisations as equal partners, we make better decisions and design support that is more relevant, trusted and effective.

Honouring Our Communities

Honouring communities therefore means making space for stories that may have been overlooked, valuing contribution in all its forms and recognising that there is no single Black experience. It means paying attention to the intersections of identity, place, culture, faith, disability and family life, while avoiding assumptions and seeing each child and family in the fullness of who they are.

What we can do

Listen

Create meaningful and accessible ways for Black children, families, staff and communities to shape priorities and evaluate progress.

Learn

Engage with Black history and contemporary lived experience throughout the year, and translate learning into practice.

Examine

Use workforce and children-and-families data to identify disparities, ask better questions and act on what the evidence shows.

Challenge

Address racism, bias and inequitable practice consistently, rather than leaving the responsibility to those most affected.

Act

Turn commitments into measurable changes in leadership, policy, supervision, commissioning and direct work with children and families.

A year-round responsibility

Black History Month is a moment to celebrate, reflect and recommit. Honouring our communities must be visible in what we prioritise, what we measure and how we behave every day. It requires all of us leaders, practitioners and partners, to build services where Black children, families and colleagues are seen, heard, valued and able to flourish.

Our shared challenge is to move beyond recognition alone: to honour our communities through sustained action, collective accountability and lasting change.

This mirrors the Workforce East article format by using a clear title, author attribution, section headings, short paragraphs and action-focused subsections, while leaving the wording completely unchanged.