Black History Month 2026: Honouring Our Communities

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When you hear, read or see these words, what comes to mind?

History? Heritage? Celebration? Belonging? Or perhaps, nothing immediately comes to mind?

For me, I see Black History Month as a good time for us to look back, reflect, celebrate, learn and, importantly, look forward. It also goes without saying that, despite the celebrations that take place throughout October, we must remember that there is no limit on how much Black communities should be celebrated. Black history is every day: every interaction, every success, every opportunity to be curious and learn, and every chance to show courage and contribute to change.

To me, this year's theme shines a light on the positive - the successes, the wins, the talent and the continued growth within Black communities, reminding us that Black history is not only about slavery, race and racism. As essential as those histories are, and as important as it is that we remember those who have fought for justice in our communities over the years, Black history is also about achievement, contribution, culture, progress and the stories that continue to be written today.

I am proud of the work that has been achieved across the Eastern Region over the last year and a half, as well as the work we continue to do. Across the Region, we commit to lead with integrity and foster an anti-racist and diverse environment where all individuals, staff and the communities that we serve are respected and valued.

I acknowledge that our experiences, identities and connections to Black History Month will shape how we respond. However, this year's theme is a powerful one. It enables us all, as individuals, to pause and reflect on our communities and honour those who contribute to Black history every day, whether those contributions are big or small.

I believe that every act can have an impact. As part of my role, I encourage individuals to recognise that, because the actions we take, the conversations we have and the curiosity we show can all contribute to meaningful change.

So, what can we do to make a difference?

Action doesn't always require big gestures, big budgets or perfectly planned initiatives. Sometimes meaningful change starts with the smaller things we choose to do consistently.

In our communities

- Be curious about the communities around us.
- Learn about people's histories and listen to their experiences.

- Celebrate individuals' achievements and contributions.

In our workplaces

- Create opportunities to listen to colleagues and those who use our services, learning from different voices and experiences.
- Start conversations, raise awareness and create spaces where colleagues can contribute and be heard.
- Consider what barriers may exist within your organisation and be prepared to challenge behaviours that you know, or feel, are not right.

As individuals

- Celebrate others.
- Listen, ask questions, learn and speak up.
- Help create spaces where others feel they belong.

As we continue to reflect and celebrate throughout Black History Month, let's not forget to carry that celebration with us throughout the year **and remember that we all have influence to create meaningful, lasting change.**