



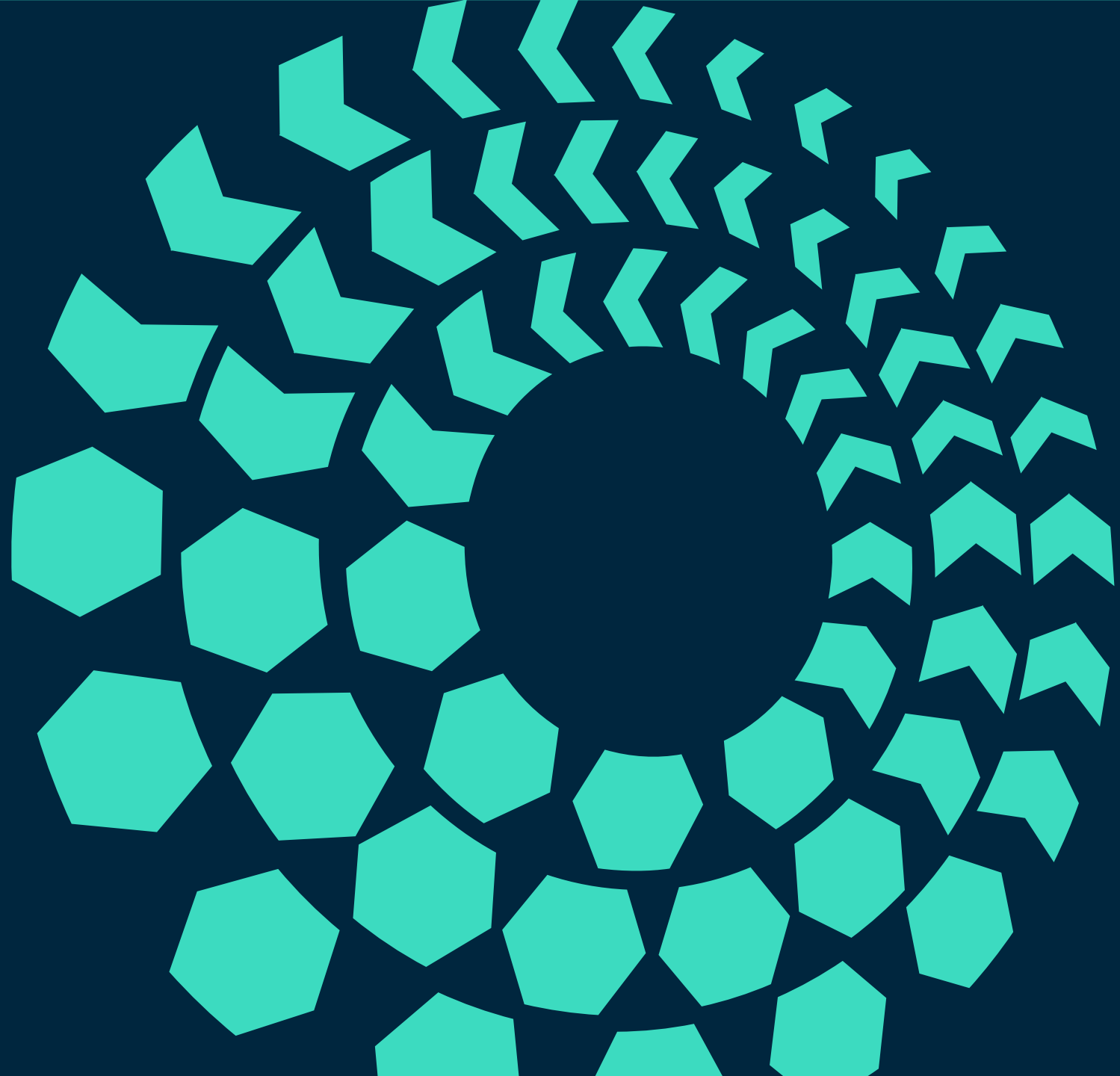
ISEP

Institute of Sustainability &
Environmental Professionals

People of Colour Mentoring Scheme

Research, insights and new cohort

Sarah Mukherjee MBE, CEO, ISEP



Agenda

11.00 Welcome Sarah Mukherjee MBE, CEO (ISEP)

11.10 Project Overview and Key Insights Dr Katherine Ellsworth-Krebs (University of Strathclyde)

11.25 Panel Discussion, Amanda Williams, Oluwaseun Johnson, Thulsi Prabakaran

11.45 Q&A

11.55 Next Cohort



Welcome



- This session is **recorded and will be available publicly**
- **Any questions**, please use the chat function and we will come to these later in the session



Objectives of this webinar:

- Share findings and insights from the pilot
- Build on the work of this successful pilot by increasing our members' contribution to shape the future of inclusive leadership in the sustainability and environment profession
- Encourage wider engagement with a second cohort which you can apply from today (mentees and mentors)

Thank you to all that participated in the pilot and its pioneering work





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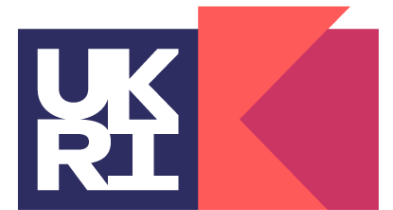
Mentoring Scheme

Insights & Findings from People of
Colour Pilot 2025

29th September 2025



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow



Economic
and Social
Research Council

Dr Katherine Ellsworth-Krebs

Chancellor's Fellow in Sustainable Design



Overview:

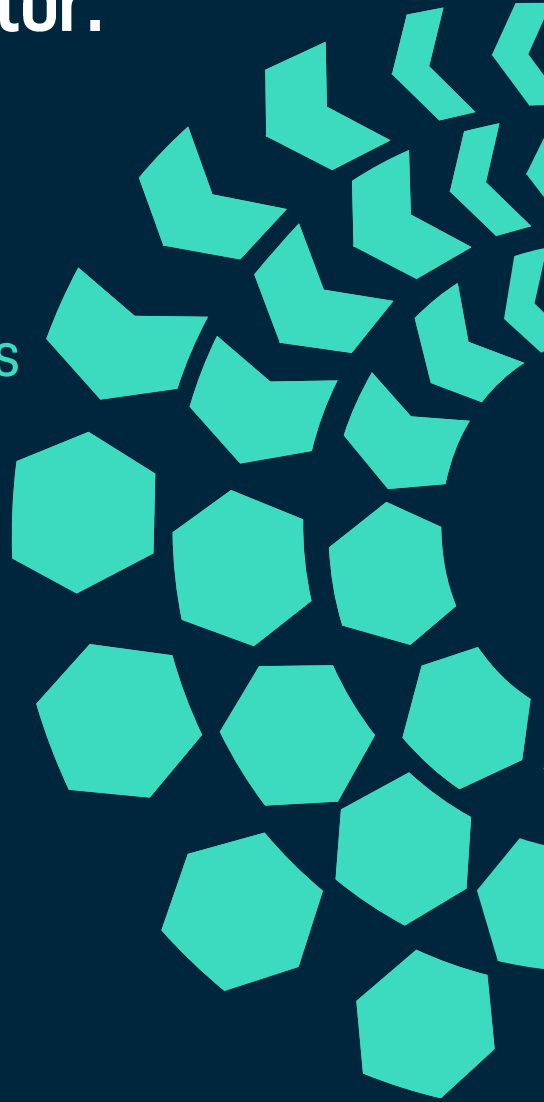
- Why a mentoring scheme for People of Colour in the sustainability and environmental profession
- ISEP's mentoring pilot for People of Colour
 - Mentees experience
 - Mentors experience



What mentors said about the value of diversity in the sector:

“We miss out by not having diverse perspectives from everyone. The solutions are wrong, the analysis is wrong, if it’s built from a tiny perspective.”

“We’re a diverse country, we’re a diverse world. It makes sense to have people who represent the communities and the businesses and the interests and the regions of where we live, in the organisations that we have.”



Context: Underrepresentation of People of Colour

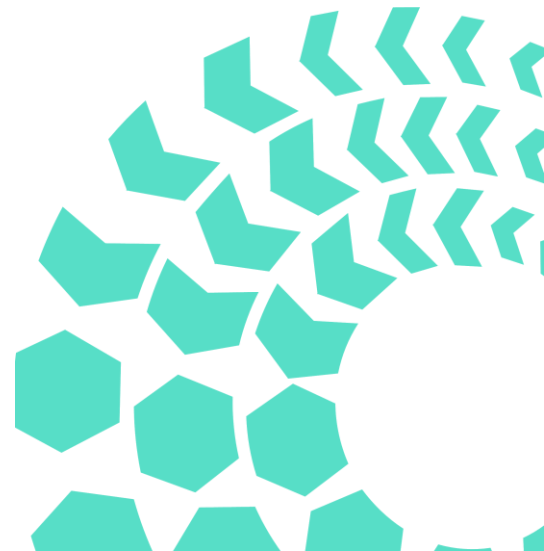
The environment, climate, sustainability and conservation sector is among the least racially diverse in the UK:

4.5% of staff identified as People of Colour in a 2024 survey of 159 UK environmental charities, not-for-profits and funders (RACE report)

16% of UK population in employment (16-64 years old) identify as non-white (ONS population survey, referenced in 2024 RACE report)

18% UK population identified as non-white (2021 Census = most recent data)

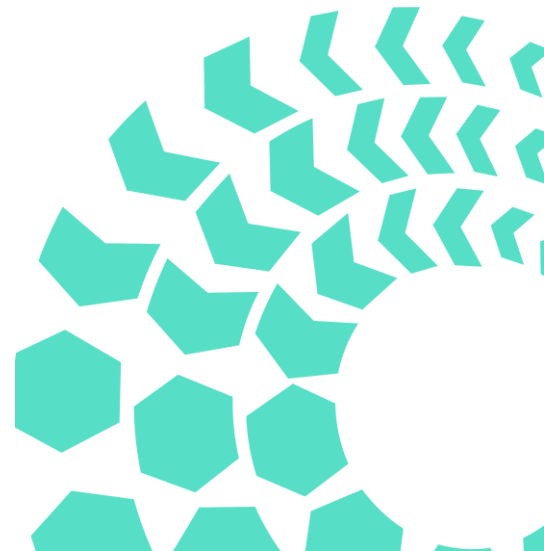
26% UK population not in the white British ethnic group (2021 Census)



What mentees said about barriers for People of Colour

“One of the most persistent is the feeling of being one of the few—or sometimes the only—Person of Colour in professional spaces, which can lead to a sense of isolation or imposter syndrome. There’s also the added pressure to represent or speak on behalf of diverse communities, even when that isn’t part of your role.”

“I think that there are not many challenges I have faced unique to race specifically, religion and age discrimination, on the other hand, I have had some challenges with.”



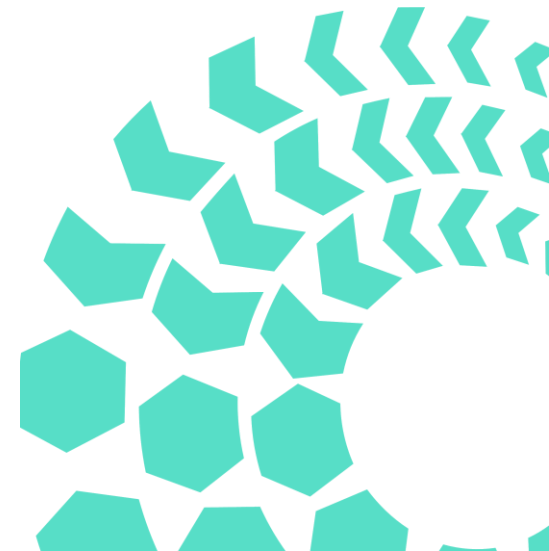
What we did

6 month scheme – 19 mentees & 18 mentors

Matching process – mentors created profiles, mentees choose the best match for them

Activities within mentoring relationships included:

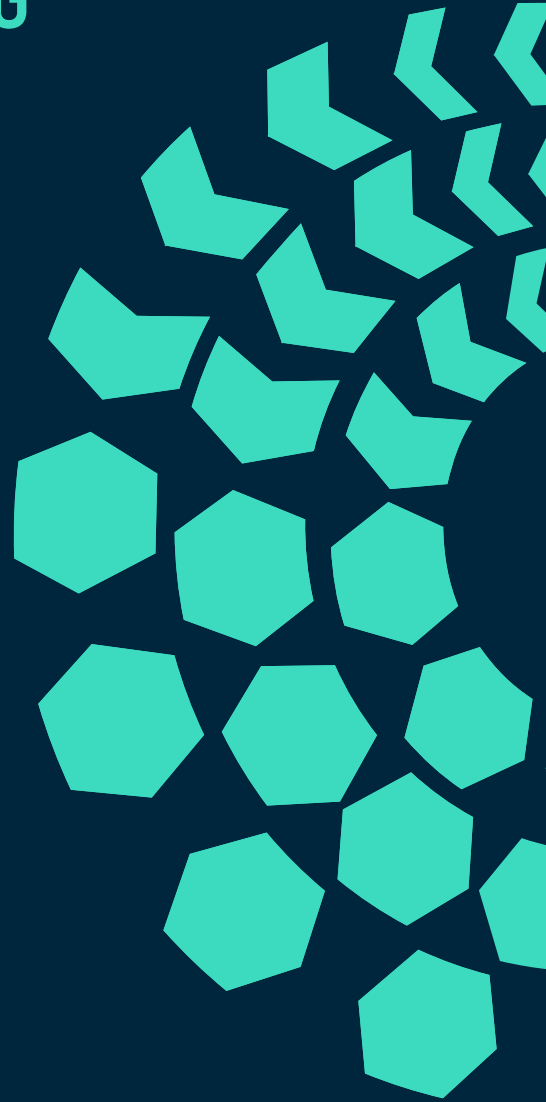
- Networking
- Reviewing CVs
- Analysing job adverts
- Mock interviews
- Updating LinkedIn profiles
- Coaching



IMPACT OF MENTORING SCHEME

The pilot was highly
rated

An average score of
9 out of 10 for
satisfaction and
likelihood of
recommendation.



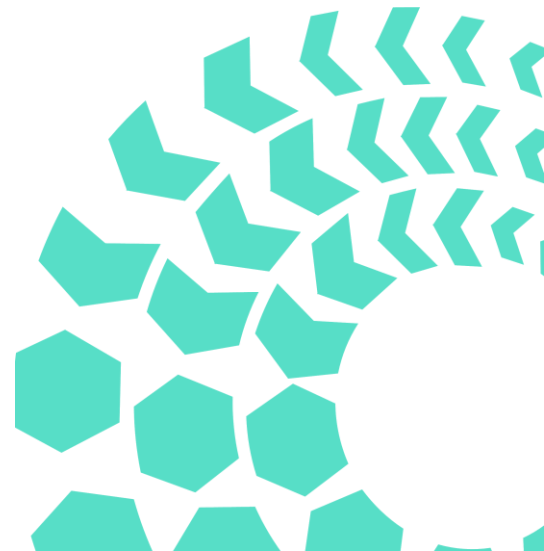
Impact on mentees

“Having a mentor who understands the unique challenges faced by People of Colour has been invaluable in building my confidence and professional clarity.

Early in the programme, I struggled with self-doubt related to my place in the sector.

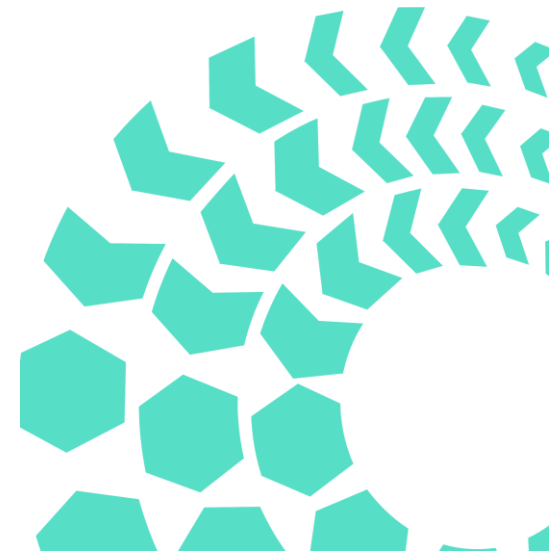
Through honest conversations with my mentor, I realised many of these feelings were shared by others and rooted in systemic issues rather than personal shortcomings.

This insight was transformative, helping me to reframe my mindset and approach opportunities with renewed confidence.”



Impact on mentees

- **Providing clarity and direction** – giving mentees a sense of opportunities
- **Skills development** – presentation and communication skills
- **Career progression and networking** – making connections and introductions
- **Personal growth & confidence** - unique traits and talents, boosting confidence



Impact on mentors

- **Connection** – learning about mentee's experience
- "We need to grow this!" ← mentors really care and want to give their time to mentoring
- **Comfort or increased willingness to talk about race (for some)** – deepening their appreciation of diversity

Why mentors got involved impacted what they 'got' from participation

1. Already informed & long-advocates on anti-racism
2. Wanted to know more about how to support underrepresented groups, including People of Colour
3. Keen to mentor professionals in the sector, underrepresentation not a key motivation

What mentees said about barriers for People of Colour

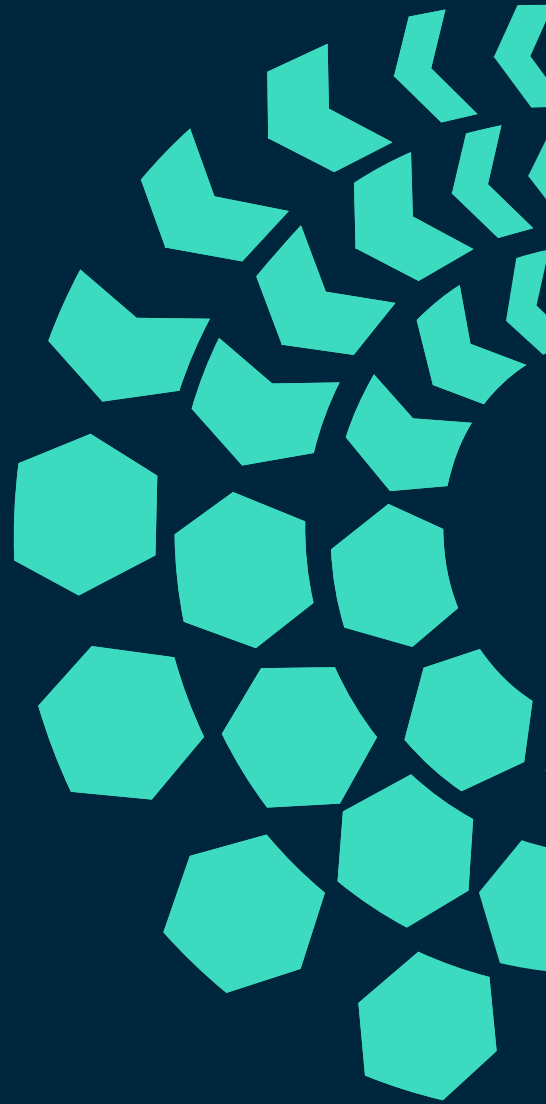
*Lack of
representation
permeates lived
experiences*

*These concerns
make it trickier to
navigate a
fledgling, highly
inter-disciplinary
field*

*Many mentees are
grappling with
multiple
challenges*

*There is a clear
role for ISEP and
highly-structured
mentorship to
support these
members*

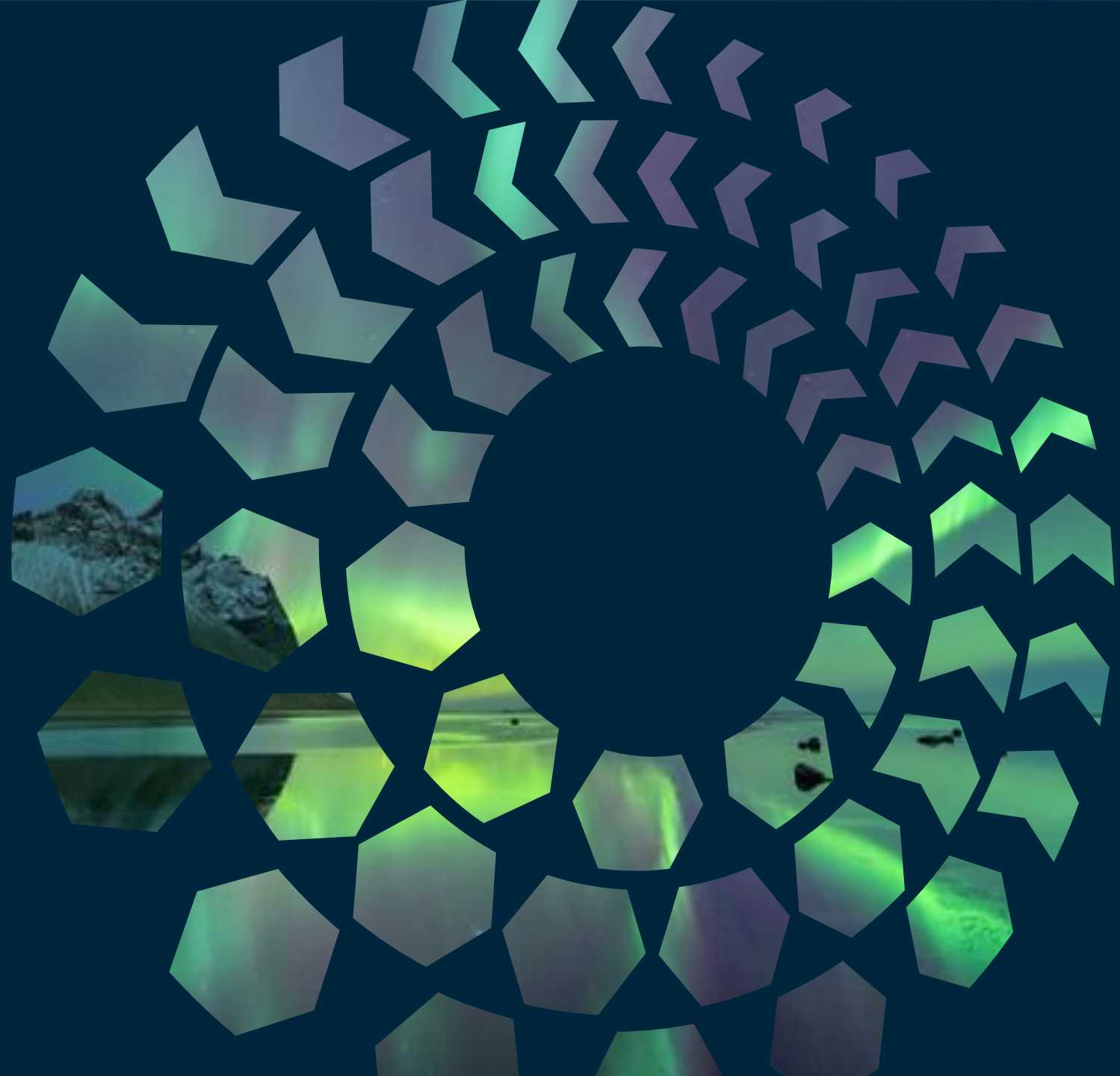
Questions





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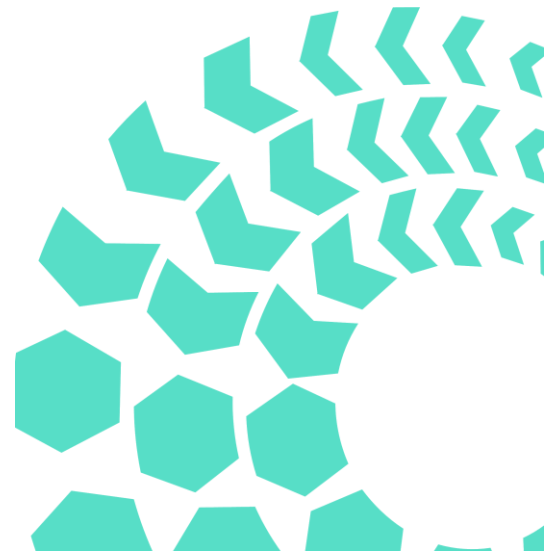
Panel



Panel - Mentor



Amanda Williams FISEP, Head of Environmental Sustainability,
Chartered Institute of Building



Panel - Mentees



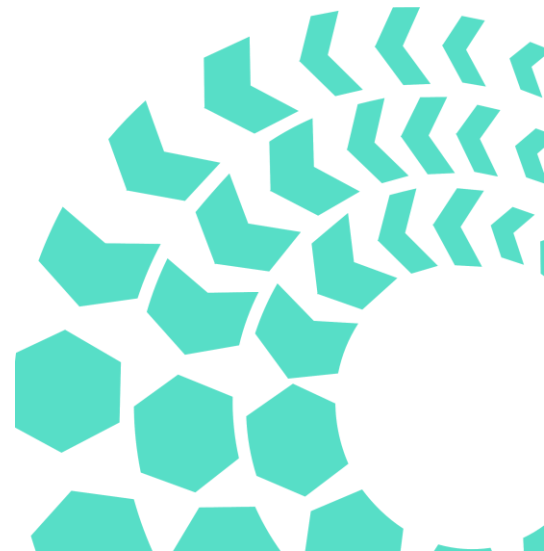
Oluwaseun Johnson ISEP, Climate Change Projects Officer, Blackburn
with Darwen Borough Council

Thulsi Prabakaran ISEP, Sustainability Manager, JISC



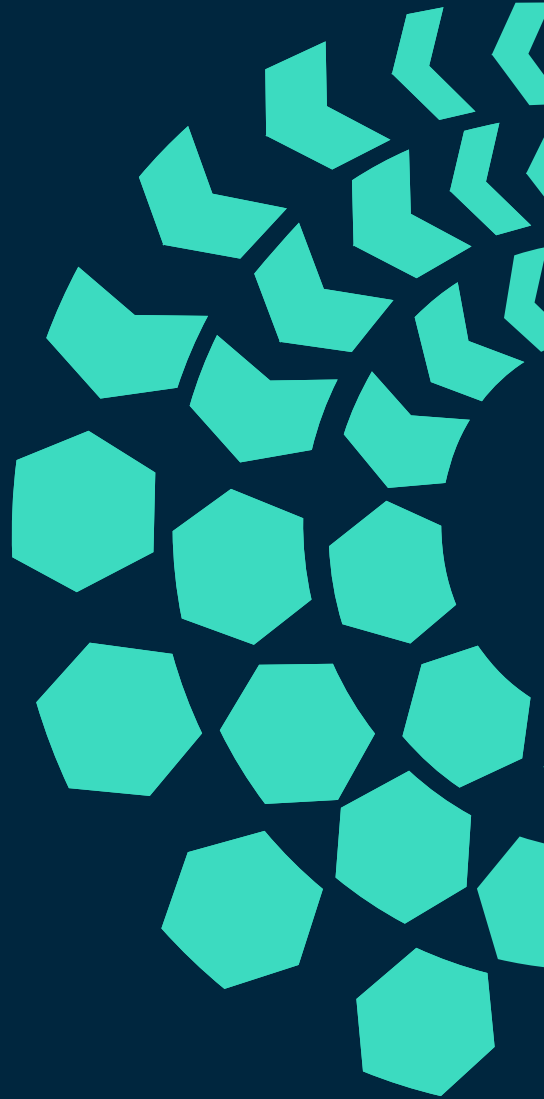
Panelists

- Brief career path to date
- What you found of benefit from participating in the pilot
- Why is this kind of scheme important?
- What you would recommend to potential mentees and mentors



Questions for Panellists

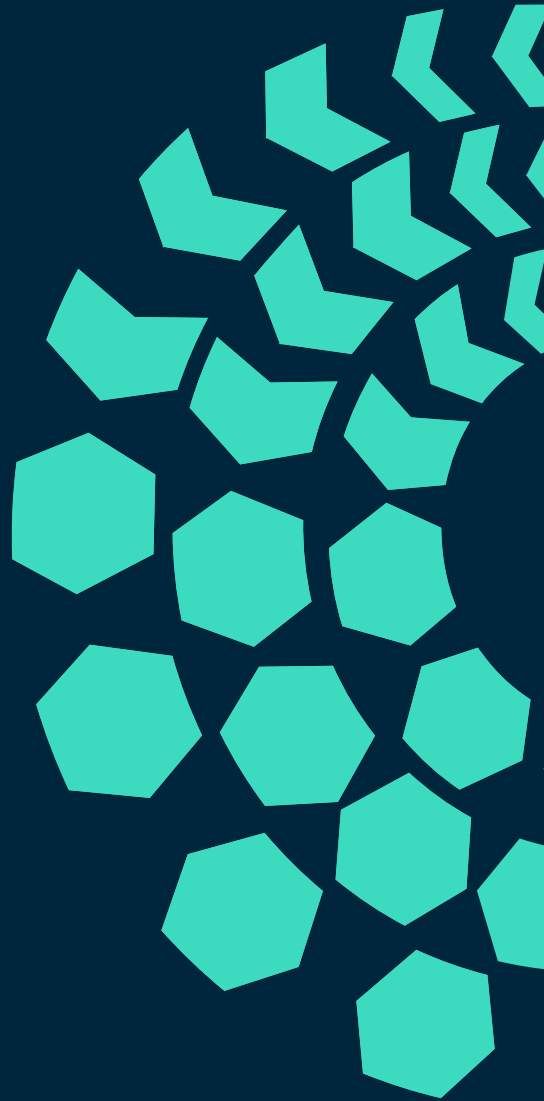
Please use the
function on GoTo
Webinar to ask
questions and if you
have a particular
panellist, please
indicate this



How to Join

People of Colour
Mentoring Scheme

Cohort 2



How to Join - Mentors

- You do not need to be a Person of Colour to be a mentor in this pilot
- Mentors must be current **Full** or **Fellow** members of ISEP (MISEP, FISEP)
- You must be based in the UK
- Not all participants will be matched in this cohort
- Must be committed to supporting People of Colour in the profession, this isn't just about mentoring, it's about supporting a marginalised group in the sector

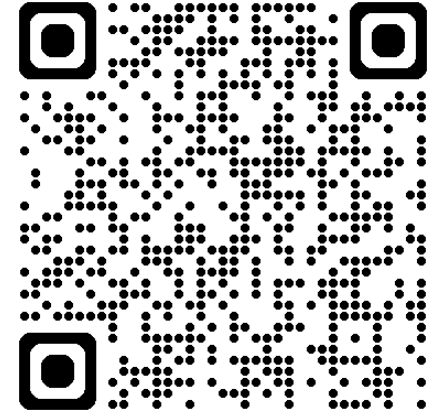
MENTOR WELCOME SESSION November 6, 9.30am – 10.30am BST



How to Join - Mentees

Our webpage is live now, so if you are interested in applying to be a mentee or a mentor, please do complete the Form.

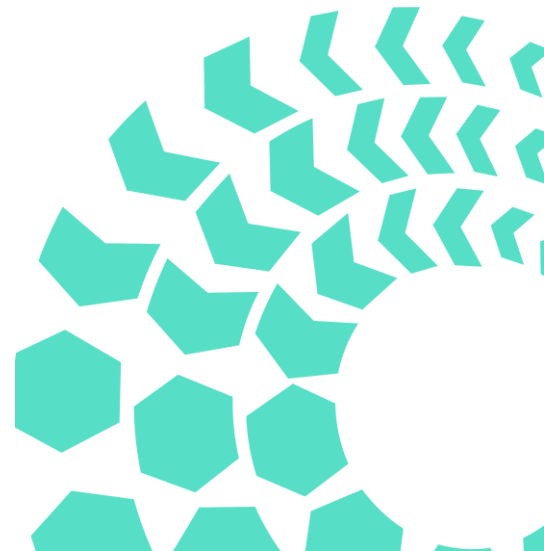
- **Applications open now until late February 2026 but we encourage early completion**
- **Confirm participation in Cohort 2:** three weeks from Application
- **Access to Mentoring Platform:** end October Mentors, early November Mentees
- ISEP will provide a **Welcome Pack** and regular drop ins and **LinkedIn page** to share experiences and learnings amongst participants



How to Join - Mentees

- You do need to be a Person of Colour to be a mentee in this pilot
- You need to have worked for 2 years in the sector and be employed and based in the UK
- Priority will be given to those who do not currently have access to mentoring schemes
- Not all participants will be matched in this cohort

MENTEE WELCOME SESSION November 4, 10am – 11am BST



Thank you

Any queries please contact
careermentoring@isepglobal.org



References

Davidson, M. N., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2001). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate researchers of color. *Review of educational research*, 71(4), 549-574.

Murrell, A. J., Rubio, D. M., Thakar, M. S., Morone, N. E., & White, G. E. (2024). Mentoring as a Buffer for the Impact of Social Unrest due to Systemic Racism and Ambient Discrimination. *The chronicle of mentoring & coaching*, 8(1), 116.

Race Report (2024) Available at: <https://www.race-report.uk/>

Samari, G., Bryant, M., & Grilo, S. (2022). An anti-racism public health graduate program: Mentoring of students and igniting community. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*, 8(4), 261-270.

Other resources that may be of interest on systemic racism:

DiAngelo, R. (2016). *White fragility: why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.

McIntosh, P. (1988) *White Privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack*. Available at: <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Peggy-McIntosh-BLM-essay.pdf>

Saini, A. (2019). *Superior: The return of race science*. Beacon Press.

