

Written Evidence Submitted by North East London Foundation Trust

Subject: The Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025 — Statutory Implementation of the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF)

Executive Summary

- This submission supports the inclusion of the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF) within the Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025.
- PCREF provides a structured, co-produced mechanism for eliminating racial inequalities in mental health services.
- Statutory implementation is necessary to ensure consistency, accountability, and long-term impact.
- Evidence from PCREF pilot sites, including NELFT, shows that sustained improvements in access, experience, and outcomes are possible when lived experience is embedded in system design and delivery.
- Embedding PCREF within legislation aligns with the Bill's ambition to eliminate disproportionate use of the Mental Health Act among racialised groups and creates a clear framework for measuring progress.

1. About Us

North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) provides integrated community and mental health services to a diverse population across London, Kent and Essex. Since April 2022, NELFT has been a pilot site for the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF), demonstrating our commitment to equitable, inclusive, and culturally appropriate care.

NELFT's PCREF programme prioritises reducing racial and structural inequalities in mental health services by co-producing change with patients, carers, and communities. The programme focuses on three priority areas:

1. The Black Male Experience

Black men remain disproportionately affected by restrictive practices in mental health care, including higher rates of detention under the Mental Health Act, restrictive practice, and seclusion, while also experiencing higher dropout rates from services such as Talking Therapies. This workstream aims to:

- Improve access to culturally appropriate mental health support in community settings through partnerships with local organisations and prevention/upstreaming care.



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- Acute Care – Improving the experiences and outcomes for Black men within inpatient and crisis care settings, with an emphasis on reducing restrictive practices and eliminating harm.

2. Identification and Support for Carers

A co-produced Carers' Strategy was launched in May 2025 to improve identification and support for carers across the Trust. Key actions include:

- System changes in our clinical system RiO to identify and support assessments for carers.
- Implementation of the Triangle of Care within inpatient services.
- Support for colleagues at Place to act on locally co-produced priorities.

3. South Asian Women and Access

South Asian women are significantly underrepresented in mental health services. Our engagement has shown:

- Diverse perceptions of mental health challenges.
- Barriers to accessing existing services.

In response, we've launched community-based group interventions for mothers in partnership with a local primary school. Plans include drop-in sessions co-facilitated by a community worker in a community space.

In 2025/26, the PCREF programme will expand to include:

- Community health services, particularly addressing conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and hypertension.
- Maternal and perinatal care access and outcomes.
- Young people's experience, including work with barbers and the Met Police

This expansion aligns with the national Core20PLUS5 priorities and NELFT's broader health equity commitments.

Leadership and Governance: Organisational Commitment

The launch of the Trust's Strategy (please see below) and the establishment of the Health Equity Committee (first meeting held 22nd May 2025) provides a platform for NELFT staff and executive leadership, system partners, and communities to shape inclusive and impactful services. Through PCREF, NELFT is building trust and transparency across its services and developing relationships by embedding lived



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experience, cultural competence, and accountability in everyday practice and service delivery.

Delivering our NELFT Strategy 2025 - 2030



This work is especially relevant to the proposed **Mental Health Bill reforms**, which aim to reduce racial disparities in the use of the Mental Health Act. Our PCREF implementation demonstrates how local, co-produced strategies can drive meaningful change at both individual and systemic levels addressing longstanding health inequities and institutional barriers.

2. Rationale for Statutory PCREF

Based on NELFT's experience, we support the case for making PCREF a statutory requirement. Our rationale includes the following:

- **Persistent Racial Disparities:** Nationally and locally, Black and Asian communities remain overrepresented in coercive mental health practices and underrepresented in early access pathways. These inequalities are entrenched and systemic.
- **Proven Impact of PCREF:** At NELFT, PCREF has helped:
 - Embed equity-focused priorities into strategic planning.
 - Increase culturally appropriate community engagement through co-produced interventions.
 - Foster collaboration between statutory services and minoritised communities, improving trust and service responsiveness.



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- **Community Voice:** Feedback from African, Caribbean, and South Asian communities, including carers and young people, consistently highlights barriers to access, experiences of racial inequities, and a need for culturally appropriate safe care. PCREF provides a mechanism for embedding lived experience into service design and delivery and decision-making.
- **Whole-System Readiness:** NELFT has a dedicated PCREF team which supports the implementation of PCREF, Core20Plus and Health Equity. NELFT's governance structures include the PCREF Executive Partnership Board, Health Equity Committee and advisory groups demonstrate that with leadership and investment, NHS Trusts can operationalise PCREF to drive system-wide change.
- **Alignment with National Priorities:** PCREF directly supports delivery of NHS England's Core20PLUS5 approach, Neighbourhood Health Strategies, the Model ICB, and anticipated 10 Year Health Plan and legal reforms under the Mental Health Bill. Making PCREF statutory will ensure consistency and accountability across the country and support the existing efforts/programmes in NELFT.

3. Legislative Recommendations

We urge the Committee to consider the following amendments to the Mental Health Bill [HL] 2025:

1. Introduce a statutory duty on NHS mental health providers to implement PCREF in full.
2. Require local co-production and community governance of PCREF implementation.
3. Link PCREF delivery to regulatory and commissioning oversight (e.g. via CQC, ICBs).
4. Ensure annual, transparent reporting on progress and impact.
5. Evidence from PCREF pilot sites, including NELFT, shows that sustained improvements in access, experience, and outcomes are possible when lived experience is embedded in system design and delivery.
6. Embedding PCREF within legislation aligns with the Bill's ambition to eliminate disproportionate use of the Mental Health Act among racialised groups and creates a clear framework for measuring progress.



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4. Conclusion

We believe that without statutory PCREF, efforts to address long standing racial inequality in mental health will remain fragmented and insufficient. Legislation is needed to embed equity as a non-negotiable principle of mental health care.

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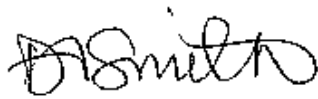
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