

**Anna Hartley, Director of Public Health for Wakefield District**

*Why reciprocal mentoring has meant so much to me.*

Abi had approached me to learn more about a career in Public Health and we got on so well that we decided to meet regularly. Over time, as we got to know each other, we started to talk about deeper issues and particularly about the impact of racism both structurally and personally. This then became a reciprocal mentoring relationship with Abi very generously and honestly sharing her perspectives as a Black woman working in a mainly white environment.



Some of my reflections are that it's easy to just surround yourself with 'people like you', when I looked at my Instagram account nearly everyone was white, female and of a certain age! Abi was able to recommend a much more diverse group of people to follow. That has really taught me a lot and been an absolute pleasure. We lend each other books – I have recently read 'I Am Not Your Baby Mother' by Candice Braithwaite; this was thought provoking and inspirational. Everyone has a duty to educate themselves about racism and there are some excellent podcasts, books and training out there. Listening to people's stories is powerful.

The reciprocal mentoring process has also helped me to be a better ally. I no longer stay quiet when I hear overt or covert racism. I challenge it and I am also able to check in with Abi to get her perspective. Likewise, she does the same with me. This gives us both support and somewhere to 'sense check'.

I am honest about the fact that I get things wrong but the important thing is to acknowledge that everyone is learning and we all have a responsibility to work together to make things better. Complacency and a lack of humility is not ok! Its also an ongoing journey. I keep learning.

Reciprocal mentoring has definitely made me a better, more thoughtful leader and ally. It has also made my life richer and more interesting. I would recommend it to anyone.