

# HOT TOPICS – OCTOBER 2023

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

### What is Black History Month?

Black History Month has been celebrated each February in USA since 1976, having been established by the Harvard educated African American scholar Dr Carter G Woodson. In the UK "Black



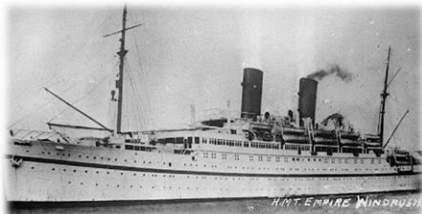
History Month is celebrated in the month of October [and was] first celebrated in 1987". [Source: [Black History Month – Metropolitan Black Police Association \(metbpa.org.uk\)](#)]. This was thanks to the Ghanaian activist, [Akyaba-Addai-Sebo](#), who brought the American celebration to London.

"People from African and Caribbean backgrounds have been a fundamental part of British history for centuries. However, campaigners believe their value and contribution to society is often overlooked, ignored or distorted. Most schools still teach a history curriculum which focuses on traditional events and the achievements of white figures. Black History Month gives everyone the opportunity to share, celebrate and understand the impact of black heritage and culture". [Source: [Black History Month: What is it and why does it matter? - BBC News](#)]

**2023 marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries** of both the arrival of the Empire Windrush to London from the Caribbean, and the start of the NHS. The interlinked histories and legacy of both the NHS and the Empire Windrush remain highly relevant to us today in our everyday lives.

### What is Windrush?

"The [HMT Empire Windrush](#) docked in Tilbury, Essex, on 22 June 1948, carrying [492] passengers from the Caribbean to fill labour shortages in the UK. In



2018 it emerged that the government had not properly recorded the details of people who had been granted permission to stay in the UK, and many were wrongly deported...many had served in the British armed forces in World War Two" [Source: [Windrush 75: What is Windrush and who are the Windrush generation? - BBC News](#)]

The theme for Black History Month 2023 is 'Saluting our sisters', to recognise "the crucial role that black women have played in shaping history, inspiring change, and building communities. This year's celebration will showcase pioneering black women who have made remarkable contributions to literature, music, fashion, sport, business, politics, academia, social and health care, and more". [Source: [Join us in 'Saluting Our Sisters' and the #WEMATTER movement during Black History Month 2023 - Black History Month 2023](#)].

This Hot Topic document barely scratches the surface about Black History Month, and so you should take the opportunity to discover more about this subject and some of the important contributions and achievements of those people with African or Caribbean heritage. For



example, those of you at Brunel University may be aware of the Mary Seacole building, home to the College of Health and Life Sciences. But did you know that [Mary Seacole](#) was a Jamaican-born nurse who cared for wounded British soldiers during the Crimean War in the 19th Century? She has a statue that stands opposite the Houses of Parliament in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital, which features a memorial disc. Learn more about Mary's life [here](#).

What about our own organisation, the Metropolitan Police? The first post-war black officer to join was [Norwell Roberts QPM](#), who started his career in 1967. You can read a Q&A with Norwell [here](#) to understand some of the challenges he faced during his time as a police officer.



Discuss the importance of Black History Month and how it may affect you in your role as a police officer. Having an understanding of the Commissioner's '[Turnaround Plan 2023-2025](#)', the [Baroness Casey Review](#), the '[Police Race Action Plan](#)' and the [MPS response](#) to the plan, will support your discussions with your PDC. Think about the [protected characteristics](#) of the Equality Act 2010 and which aspects of our British Values [Democracy, Rule of Law, Respect & Tolerance, Individual Liberty] may be particularly relevant to supporting Black History Month.

If you have been affected by anything that you have read in this Hot Topic, you may discuss your concerns with your PDC, HEI staff or your line manager in the first instance.