

pro-manchester

REG CONNECTS

2nd July 2026

The racial equity business event

Speaker highlights



Tom Stannard
Manchester City
Council



Erinma Bell MBE
CARISMA



Nazir Afzal OBE
Former Chief
Crown Prosecutor



Helen Robinson
Autotrader



Zahoor Ahmad
Co-op Group



Angela Essel
Thales UK

Sponsors:

bruntwood
SciTech

MILLS & REEVE
Achieve more. Together.

Partners:





About the event

REG Connects is a unique gathering for business and community leaders, investors and ethnic minority business owners (EMBs).

This one-day event is designed to spark fresh thinking and practical action on racial equity and inclusive growth. It brings together a cross-sector network to share ideas, build partnerships, and shape a more proactive, equitable and commercially successful future for Manchester and beyond.

A Bold, Commercially Focused Programme

Expect a full day of keynotes, panels, live pitches, workshops and roundtables.

Stronger Community, Lasting Impact

With more time for connection and collaboration, you'll leave REG Connects 2026 inspired and equipped with practical tools to drive equity forward in your organisation and beyond.

Action + Accountability

This year will focus on tangible outcomes and next steps—from best practice sharing to live feedback loops that shape our ongoing strategy.

REG AGENDA - 2nd July

08.30 Doors Open

Registration and networking with tea and coffee available

09.00 Host's Opening: Setting the Scene

Ngozi Weller, Director, Aurora Inc

Wayne Bennett, Director, Made4Tech Global



09.05 Opening Fireside Chat: Manchester's Mission - Equity, Inclusive Growth and Economic Ambition

Tom Stannard, Chief Executive, Manchester City Council

Karen Gabay, Editor and Producer, BBC



09.20 Championing Diverse Talent and Inclusive Cultures to Deliver Meaningful Results

Hosted by: Danielle Ingham, Partner, Mills and Reeve

Khurram Hussain, Partner, Warren Partners

Bethany Adam, Head of Purpose and Impact, Bruntwood

Angela Essel, Senior Account Director – National Security, Thales UK

Helen Robinson, Inclusion and Community Engagement Manager, Autotrader



10.00 Interactive Break-Out Huddles

These sessions will be conversational, commercially grounded and action-oriented. During registration, select from the following options (Allocation is based on first come, first served)

1. Representation vs Influence: Rethinking Pathways to Leadership

Zahoor Ahmad, Group Head of Social Mobility, Inclusion and Belonging, Co-op Group



2. Hiring, Promotion & Cultural Fit: Challenging Hidden Barriers to progress

Danielle Ingham, Partner, Mills and Reeve



3. Entrepreneurship, Investment & Equitable Access to Capital

Tayub Amjad, Owner, Zouk Tea Bar & Grill

Robert Croll, Founder, Epiphiny Flow



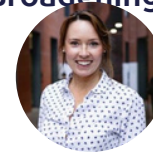
4. AI, Technology & The Future of Workplace Equity

James Akrigg, Founder, Cloudy Software



5. Intersectionality, Neurodiversity and Race: Broadening Inclusion

Kirsty Bradley-Law, Partnerships and Development Lead, DISC College



AGENDA

10.45 Morning Coffee & Networking

Continue your discussions | Visit the exhibition stands |
Make new connections

11.15 Are We Measuring What Really Matters for Inclusion?

Hosted by Ngozi Weller, Director, Aurora Inc
Zahoor Ahmed, Head of Social Mobility, Inclusion and Belonging, Co-op Group
Simon Manterfield, Lead Assessor, National and Global Equality Standards, EY



11.40 Keynote: Forged in Fire - Community Leadership, Racial Equity and Business Resilience

Professor Erinma Bell MBE, Community Peace Activist and COO, Carisma



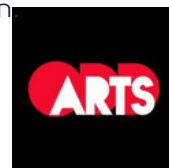
11.50 What lessons from business and communities can drive change at scale?

Ifem Onuora, Head of Race Equity and Inclusion, FA Premier League
Prof Erinma Bell MBE, CEO, CARISMA Services
Ifem Onuora, Head of Race Equity and Inclusion, FA Premier League
Tayub Amjad, Owner, Zouk Tea Bar & Grill
Charles Kwaku-Odoi, Chief Executive Officer, Caribbean & African Health Network



12.20 Elouise Edwards brought to you by Odd Arts

A powerful, interactive theatre experience celebrating the life and legacy of Elouise Edwards and the collective history of Black communities in Britain



12:40 Closing Remarks

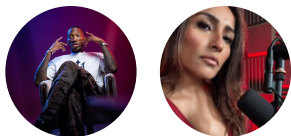
12.45 Lunch

Afternoon Options

Main Studio (Barbirolli Room)

13.30 Think Deepa Podcast

Deepa Parekh, Podcast Host, Producer, Think Deepa
Kofi Josephs, former international Basketball player and Founder, Why Not I



14.30 Fearless Diversity Podcast

Rachel Cashman and Simon Fanshawe, Hosts, Fearless Diversity
Nazir Afzal OBE, Former Chief Crown Prosecutor



Interactive Break-Out Huddles (Circle Foyer)

13.30 Break out Huddles

1. Representation vs Influence: Rethinking Pathways to Leadership

Simon Manterfield, Lead Assessor, National and Global Equality Standards, EY



2. Hiring, Promotion & Cultural Fit: Challenging Hidden Barriers to progress

Desmeana Johnson, Deputy Marketing Director, Manchester Metropolitan University



3. AI, Technology & The Future of Workplace Equity

Mihran Hovnanian, Principal Consultant, TopRow.AI



Afternoon Options continued...

Workshops (The Green Room)

13.30 Workshop A: When Silence Becomes Risk: Why Psychological Safety Matters in Regulated Workplaces

This interactive workshop will explore how organisations can create environments where people feel safe to speak up, challenge ideas, admit mistakes, raise concerns and contribute fully without fear of blame, embarrassment or negative consequences.

Martina Witter, Founder, Rapha Therapy Services



14.30 Workshop B: Scared to Say the Wrong Thing? Let's Talk About Race

In this interactive session, we'll explore racial microaggressions, what they are, how they show up in everyday language. Together, we'll unpack different racial microaggressions and build a practical toolkit to help you recognise the signs, understand the impact, take responsibility, and feel more confident taking action.

Catherine Millan, Founder, Be What you See



Early Careers Hub (Circle Foyer)

14.30 Early Careers: Practical Steps to Starting Your Career with Confidence

This dedicated session for graduates offers practical insight, honest advice and the opportunity to build confidence as you take your first steps into the workplace. It will be split into 3 parts:

- **A practical masterclass focused on job applications and standing out**

Hosted by DWF

- **A panel and Q&A with early careers professionals sharing real experiences and answering your questions**

Host: Samantha Quinn, Head of Programmes, Agent Academy

Panellists include:

Chen Ji, Paralegal, Brabners

Favour Onyeagoziri, Customer Product and Proposition, Commercial Banking, Natwest

Teza Simukulwa, Programme Delivery Manager, Agent Academy



- **An informal mixer to connect with employers and professionals in a supportive, non-recruitment setting**

