

## PRESS RELEASE

### PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release



### **Dame Elizabeth Anionwu honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award by Diversity UK**

Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu OM DBE FRCN FQICN has been recognised with the prestigious Diversity UK Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was presented on Wednesday 12 November 2025 during the Paul Stephenson Lecture 2025, hosted by Eversheds Sutherland at their city headquarters in London.

Dame Elizabeth, widely acknowledged as one of the United Kingdom's greatest nurses and a pioneering figure in sickle cell and thalassaemia care, was celebrated for sixty years of exceptional service, leadership and activism.

This year's Paul Stephenson Lecture marked the sixtieth anniversary of the 1965 Race Relations Act and focused on the theme *Blueprint for Change*. Lopa Patel MBE, Chair of Diversity UK, hosted a fireside chat with Dame Elizabeth exploring her memoir *Dreams from My Mother*. The discussion highlighted practical approaches to activism, including the creation of supportive networks, the importance of in depth learning, the documentation of lived experiences and the gathering of evidence to shape meaningful progress.

## PRESS RELEASE

---

The lecture also reflected on a year of Diversity UK initiatives addressing inequalities in healthcare. These included the International Women's Day event on Closing the Gender Health Gap, the Diversity Tech Summit 2025 which examined Women's Health, and a thought provoking debate on the role of Frugal AI in improving health outcomes.

Claire Carroll, Partner at Eversheds Sutherland, presented the award saying, "*At Eversheds Sutherland we have enjoyed a long and rewarding partnership with Diversity UK. It was our absolute pleasure to host the Paul Stephenson Lecture once again and a real privilege to hear Dame Elizabeth Anionwu's inspirational words.*"

Lopa Patel MBE paid tribute to Dame Elizabeth's pioneering achievements, including her role as the United Kingdom's first Sickle Cell Nurse Specialist, the establishment of the first nurse led sickle cell and thalassaemia counselling service in 1979, and the founding of the Mary Seacole Centre for Nursing Practice at the University of West London. She also recognised Dame Elizabeth's leadership in championing the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue, unveiled in 2016 as the first statue in the United Kingdom to honour a named black woman.

Offering advice to young people, particularly those from mixed heritage or non traditional families or those beginning careers in healthcare or activism, Dame Elizabeth encouraged them to hold on to their dreams. She described them as a compass for both personal development and social transformation.

The evening concluded with an ovation in recognition of Dame Elizabeth's lifelong commitment to compassion, equity and public service.

**ENDS**

**Press Images:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/4zJRQAhfTP1qu4ut8>

---

## PRESS RELEASE

---

### Notes for Editors:

#### About Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu OM DBE FRCN FQICN

Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu OM DBE FRCN FQICN is an Emeritus Professor of Nursing at the University of West London and a pioneering figure in sickle cell and thalassaemia care. Born in Birmingham in 1947 to Irish and Nigerian parents, she was inspired to become a nurse after receiving exceptional care as a child.

She began her NHS career at 16 and went on to become the UK's first Sickle Cell Nurse Specialist, establishing the country's first nurse-led sickle cell and thalassaemia counselling service in 1979. She later became Dean of the School of Adult Nursing Studies at the University of West London, where she also founded the Mary Seacole Centre for Nursing Practice.

Dame Elizabeth has written extensively on nursing and health inequalities, including her memoir *Dreams From My Mother* (2021). She has played a central role in honouring Mary Seacole's legacy, serving as Vice-Chair of the appeal for the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue unveiled in 2016.

Her many honours include a CBE (2001), Fellowship of the Royal College of Nursing (2004), a DBE (2017), and the Order of Merit (2022). She has also received numerous lifetime achievement awards and honorary doctorates. In May 2023 she carried the Sovereign's Orb during the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

---

#### **Dreams From My Mother by Dame Elizabeth N. Anionwu**

It's 1947 and a sheltered Catholic girl is studying Classics at Newnham College, Cambridge. She is the first one in her family to go to university - and then she discovers that she's pregnant. The father is also a student at Cambridge, studying law. And he is black.

Despite pressure to give up her baby for adoption, the young mother has big dreams for her child's future. Her daughter Elizabeth overcomes a background of shame, stigma, and discrimination, to become one of the UK's greatest ever nurses, and the first ever sickle cell nurse specialist. Recently named a BBC 100 Women of the Year 2020 and awarded a Damehood, Dame Elizabeth Anionwu has continued her work throughout her retirement, and recently brought to the nation's attention how Covid-19 has had a devastating effect on Black and Asian communities.

*Dreams From My Mother* is an inspiring story about childhood, race, identity, family, friendship, hope and what makes us who we are. Ultimately, it is an incredibly moving story of a mother and a daughter separated by society, but united in the dreams they shared for her future.

---

#### **About Diversity UK**

Diversity UK is an equality charity that researches, advocates and promotes ideas to improve diversity and inclusion in Britain. The charity aims to advance public understanding of diversity and inclusion in the workplace by conducting research for public benefit and by publishing the results.

<https://diversityuk.org/>