



## Editorial

# Embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion in radiology: insights from the 2024 British Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (BSGAR) member survey and mentorship programme



## Introduction

The UK's National Health Service (NHS) serves an increasingly diverse population, with a growing number of international medical graduates (IMGs).<sup>1–3</sup> In response to this evolving landscape, the British Society of Gastrointestinal and Abdominal Radiology (BSGAR) has formally recognised the importance of fostering a culture of representation, accessibility, and inclusivity. Since 2020, the BSGAR has made significant strides in embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) into its leadership, educational initiatives, and member engagement.

Two previous editorials—Diversity and Equity: A Radiology Society's Effort (2021)<sup>4</sup> and A Radiology Society's Update (2023)<sup>5</sup>—outlined this ongoing commitment, highlighting both achievements and areas for growth. This article builds on that foundation by presenting findings from the 2024 BSGAR Member Survey, showcasing new dimensions of member experience, and reflecting on the success of BSGAR's mentorship programmes.

## 2024 BSGAR member survey: key themes

Building on the 2021 manifesto and the 2023 update, the 2024 survey offers deeper insights into both progress and persistent challenges. Eighty-seven participants responded to our survey with a response rate of 12.5 %. This year's focus expanded to include digital accessibility, caring responsibilities, neurodiversity, and members' qualitative perceptions of inclusiveness and leadership.

## Caring responsibilities

Caring responsibilities—particularly among parents—emerged as a prominent theme:

- Fifty-four percent of respondents identified as having primary or dependent care responsibilities.
- Ninety percent felt that the BSGAR is accessible to those with caring duties.

Respondents emphasised the value of virtual and hybrid formats, enabling flexible and broader participation. Online education, hybrid conferences, and on-demand content were praised for allowing members with caring responsibilities or those living far from event venues to stay engaged. For example, 544 views of the BSGAR virtual education were recorded in one month (July 2025).

However, in-person events were often described as "insufficiently family friendly." Suggestions for improvement included:

- On-site childcare facilities.
- Quiet or nursing rooms.
- Clearer encouragement for parental attendance.
- Continued availability of recorded sessions to accommodate missed content.

These enhancements could support greater participation in face-to-face events while maintaining the benefits of digital accessibility.

## Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity was a newly explored area in the 2024 survey:

- Fifteen percent of respondents identified as neurodiverse, including individuals with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, autism, and Tourette's.

- Seventy-seven percent described the BSGAR as “neuro-friendly.”

While many respondents felt welcomed, others noted a general lack of awareness and understanding around neurodiversity among the BSGAR members/meeting attendees. This knowledge gap can hinder full inclusion and integration. The following recommendations were suggested:

- Educational initiatives to raise awareness.
- Adjustments to event environments (eg, lighting and sound).
- Accessible and neurodiverse friendly presentation formats.
- More accessible resources, such as lecture handouts.
- Increased administrative support for neurodiverse members.

These suggestions highlight the need for both cultural and practical changes to ensure members feel supported. We shall endeavour to apply these suggestions to our upcoming meetings.

## Barriers to delivery

The provision of childcare and family friendly facilities presents notable logistical and financial challenges. Meeting safeguarding requirements, securing qualified staff, and allocating appropriate space can significantly increase operational costs, prompting important decisions about whether these expenses should be covered by the organisation, attendees, or through a shared model. Ensuring that such services remain both safe and financially sustainable is therefore a central consideration.

Neurodiversity-related adjustments also involve practical constraints. Venue infrastructure may limit modifications such as adaptable lighting, quieter spaces, or alternative presentation formats, and these changes may alter the traditional atmosphere of conference events. Additionally, successful implementation requires a degree of cultural change and member education to ensure that the purpose of these adjustments is understood and that attendees feel comfortable using the available accommodations.

## Mentoring outcomes: advancing equity and professional development in radiology

The BSGAR launched its mentoring scheme in 2021 to provide structured professional support for junior members and early career consultants. A key objective of the initiative, to promote DEI, was encouraging participation from women and individuals from underrepresented groups (URGs) within radiology.

## Programme structure and reach

The scheme comprises three core components:

1. **Tailored mentor–mentee matching** based on professional interests and developmental needs.
2. **A one-day training course** for both mentors and mentees to establish expectations and build rapport.
3. **A structured mentorship framework** recommending regular meetings over a one-year cycle.

To date, the programme has supported **55 mentees** across **four cohorts**, demonstrating consistent year-on-year growth in participation and engagement.

## Participant demographics

Among the 55 mentees enrolled between 2021 and 2024:

- Overall, **63.6 %** identified as female.
- Overall, **69.0 %** were from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- Overall, **60.0 %** were employed at university-affiliated teaching hospitals, and **32.7 %** at district general hospital.

Of the **31 mentors** engaged over the same period:

- Overall, **51.7 %** were male.
- Overall, **68.0 %** identified as White.

Two mentors—one male and one female, both from ethnic minority backgrounds—were recognised for exceptional engagement, each supporting five mentees across multiple cycles.

Overall, there is consistent growth of numbers of both mentors and mentees along those years with new fifteen members mentors with better gender balance (males from 30 to 52 %).

## Benefits and challenges

Evaluation of the scheme revealed multiple benefits:

- Structured guidance on career planning and transitions.
- Expansion of professional networks.
- Support for academic development, including research opportunities and conference participation.

The programme relies heavily on mentor volunteers giving freely of their time and energies. While the founding mentor cohort were gifted tokens of appreciation and all mentors are offered free dinner at an in-person BSGAR conference, scalability remains a challenge given the

significant radiology workforce shortage and other demands on individual's time.

## Feedback and satisfaction

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive:

**Mentors** reported an average experience rating of **4.67/5**, describing the role as "rewarding" and "reciprocal." All respondents indicated they would recommend participation to colleagues.

**Mentees** rated their experience at **4.45/5**, highlighting the value of senior guidance, independent career advice, and support in navigating professional challenges.

We have recorded some of the quotes here to highlight the impact of the mentorship programme.

Quote 1: "Importance of senior support/guidance. Huge potential for one's career - have short and long term goals. Importance of work/life balance. BSGAR is a great institution and can help effect real change in practise at local and national level."

Quote 2 "This is a wonderful opportunity to build a relationship with a BSGAR mentor. It is worth dipping your toe in and getting a chance to explore mentoring. It has been invaluable during my time as a new Consultant. I really valued the experience and knowledge my BSGAR mentor brought."

## Future directions for the mentorship programme

The BSGAR remains committed to evolving the mentoring scheme in alignment with its broader EDI goals. Future priorities include:

- Expanding mentor diversity and representation.
- Enhancing feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement.
- Integrating mentorship with other society-led initiatives to foster an inclusive leadership and a stronger sense of belonging.

## Looking ahead: priorities for action

The BSGAR is committed to shifting from a focus on numerical representation to fostering a deeper sense of belonging and qualitative satisfaction among its members. The EDI subcommittee will endeavour to develop recommendations that promote inclusive event design, greater flexibility, and alternative participation options.

The findings from the 2024 survey will play a key role in shaping future strategies, with priorities including strengthening support for members who have caring responsibilities, increasing awareness, and accommodations for neurodiverse individuals, and driving cultural change through practical, action-focused initiatives.

## Author Contribution

KE is the corresponding author, responsible for writing and reviewing the manuscript and submitting the publication. SC contributed to the manuscript preparation and editing. BR, MMK, and SH contributed to the BSGAR mentorship section of the manuscript including extracting and analysing data and interpreting results. BR and CC contributed to the manuscript in editing and reviewing it.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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