

What 3 x online focus groups, moderated in October/November 2022



Three groups were put together with the following parameters:

1. Trainees, comprised of a mix of core and advanced trainees (**5 participants**)
2. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (**7 participants**)
3. SAS Doctors (**3 participants**)



Who

- Across the groups, members came from the following Division/Devolved Nations: Eastern; London; North West; South East; South West; West Midlands; Wales; Scotland.
- A broad spread of **workplace, gender identity, ethnicity and age** was achieved across the groups.

Members are facing increasingly demanding working conditions. These stem from an influx of patients adding to already long waiting lists, and staff shortages.

- Every member who took part in the focus groups highlighted the fact that their **workload has increased significantly** in the past year to the point where it is becoming unmanageable for them.
- A number of reasons were cited as to why the workload is increasing, with many of these reasons linked to the **recent pandemic**:



Members are facing increasingly demanding working conditions. These stem from an influx of patients adding to already long waiting lists, and staff shortages.

“One of the biggest challenges is just the **sheer volume of work on the waiting lists**...but we’ve also had some sickness in my team which means you don’t get through your waiting lists because you’re just picking up other people’s work, so that’s been frustrating...The waiting lists have always been growing, but the recent staff sicknesses have made the situation worst.”

SAS Group



“The main difficulty we have had, coming out of lockdown, is that **all of our nurses have left**. There is then a **general recruitment issue** – we’re running on a rate of less than 50% of our staffing, and that was pretty low to begin with.”

SAS Group



“There’s a **constant pressure** to move patients out of the hospital to create beds and that’s a huge difficulty.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



“**COVID** has changed a lot [within the workplace], you’re getting a lot of **staff sickness** and we’re also seeing a **high turnover of staff**.”

Trainee Group



“I think the **lack of administrative support** for consultants has been difficult, especially when combined with the waiting lists post-COVID.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



“In addition to the workforce shortage, there’s also a **need for more funding for mental health services, like beds**. Shortage of beds is a real issue...I wish the Government was listening more in terms of having adequate provision for mental health services, especially in terms of beds”.

Trainee Group



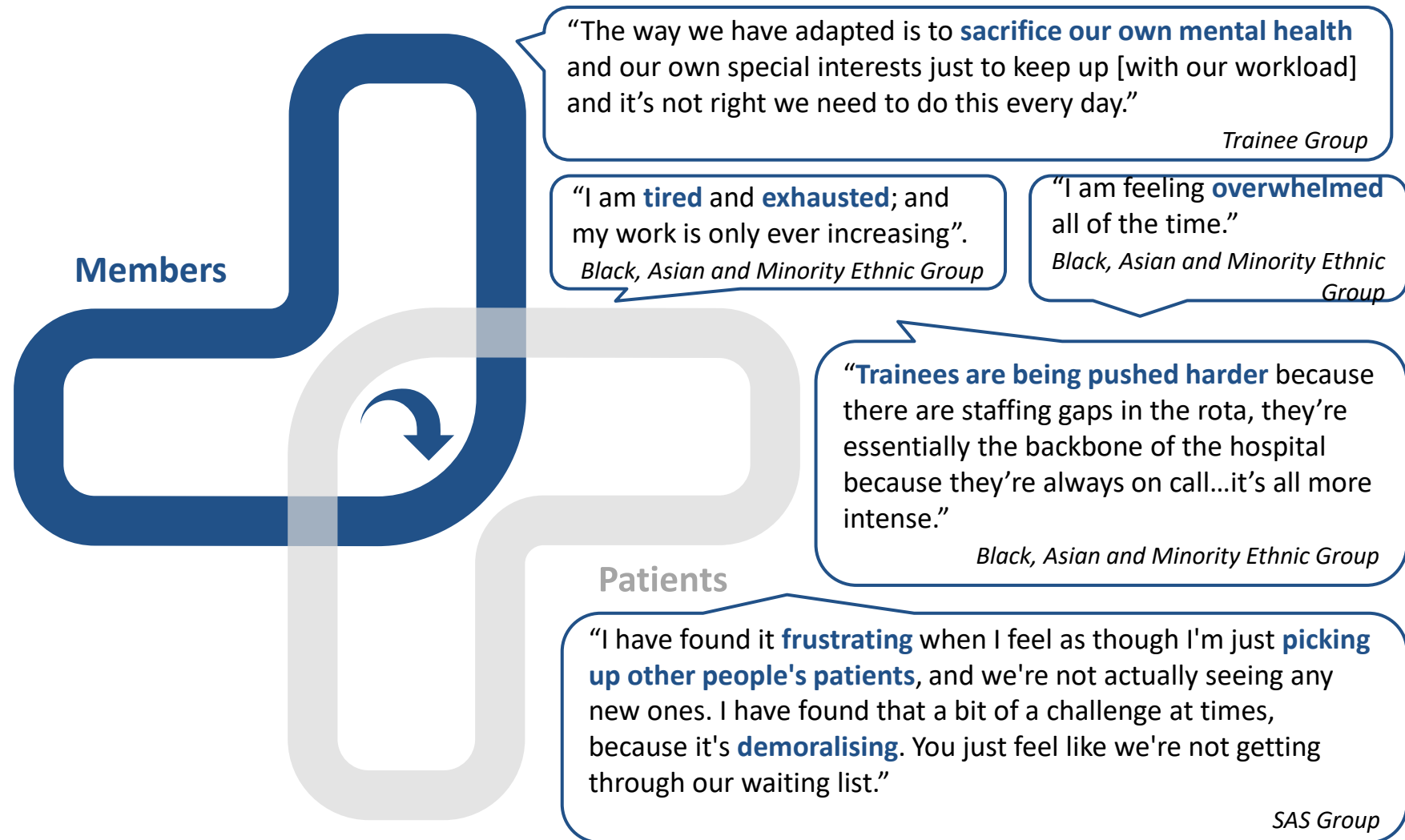
“**Workload pressures** have sometimes felt **overwhelming**. When I reflect back on my earlier days as a consultant, it actually felt a lot more manageable and a lot less overwhelming. Currently, I **feel more anxious** and even overwhelmed some of the time, which I didn't used to.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



The workload facing psychiatrists is taking a toll on their own mental health, with many not feeling valued within the profession and their aim now simply just getting through the day. Trainees and SAS Doctors in particular appear to be suffering as they pick up the extra workload due to staff shortages.

- Members noted that they are **working longer hours** as they face a **'constant to do list'**. This means they have to **sacrifice their own time** (and pursuing their own interests) in their attempt to keep up with the demand.
- Some of the words members used to describe their situation include:
 - Tired
 - Exhausted all of the time
 - Frustrated
 - Feeling **helpless** and **hopeless**
 - Disillusioned
 - Demoralised



As working conditions deteriorate and workload becomes more overwhelming, there are concerns amongst members that the quality of patient care is slipping.

“When we’re so busy, I start wondering whether I have given the patient the best care...”

Trainee Group

“We have **no headspace left** to think about how to improve processes [benefitting our patients], instead we’re always in **reactive mode**, trying to get through the day.”

Trainee Group

“During one rotation I was seeing doctors do a **ward review without having the right staff present** due to staff shortages...it means that the ward review happens without necessarily the right people and it’s unlikely to give the patients the best experience.”

Trainee Group

“New patients and demands affect my patients, my patient care. I don’t want to let that slip so I’m constantly trying to put that first, but I **wish I had more time in the day.**”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

Members

- Members cite a some key factors which they believe are impacting the quality of patient care:

Patients

1. Extra responsibility is being given to psychiatrists who are not necessarily prepared for certain duties. It was noted amongst the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group that **trainees are being pushed harder** and are becoming the backbone of hospitals, filling the space left by consultants leaving the profession. **SAS Doctors** also hold similar views.
2. Long-term thinking is being eroded as Psychiatrists are in **short-term ‘reactive’ mode**.
3. The long waiting lists are causing some psychiatrists to make decisions that may not be in the best interests of a patient as they **attempt to balance providing the most appropriate care vs seeing as many patients as possible** to combat the backlog.

When RbD ran focus groups with members in the first quarter of 2021, it was clear that members had various frustrations, with heavy workloads being cited frequently...

2021

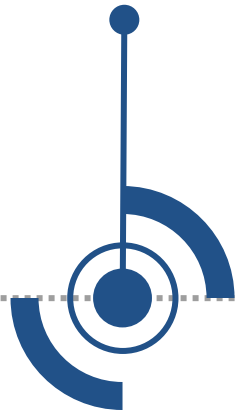
Report Summary from the **focus groups run in the first quarter of 2021** re. working conditions:

- *“Looking more broadly at member wellbeing and their professional struggles and channels, members cite various frustrations at work including lack of staff, bureaucracy and red tape, budget cuts, lack of support in the workplace, heavy workloads, balancing clinical responsibilities with managerial responsibilities, administration, inadequate training, feeling isolated and unpredictability of work (‘you can’t schedule a crisis’).”*

2022

...however, 18 months later, these frustrations and issues have grown considerably, and have begun to wear down members. Some are evidently demoralised by their own situation.

2021



- Extract from the summary report from the **focus groups run in the first quarter of 2021** re. working conditions:
“Looking more broadly at member wellbeing and their professional struggles and channels, members cite various frustrations at work including lack of staff, bureaucracy and red tape, budget cuts, lack of support in the workplace, heavy workloads, balancing clinical responsibilities with managerial responsibilities, administration, inadequate training, feeling isolated and unpredictability of work (‘you can’t schedule a crisis’).”

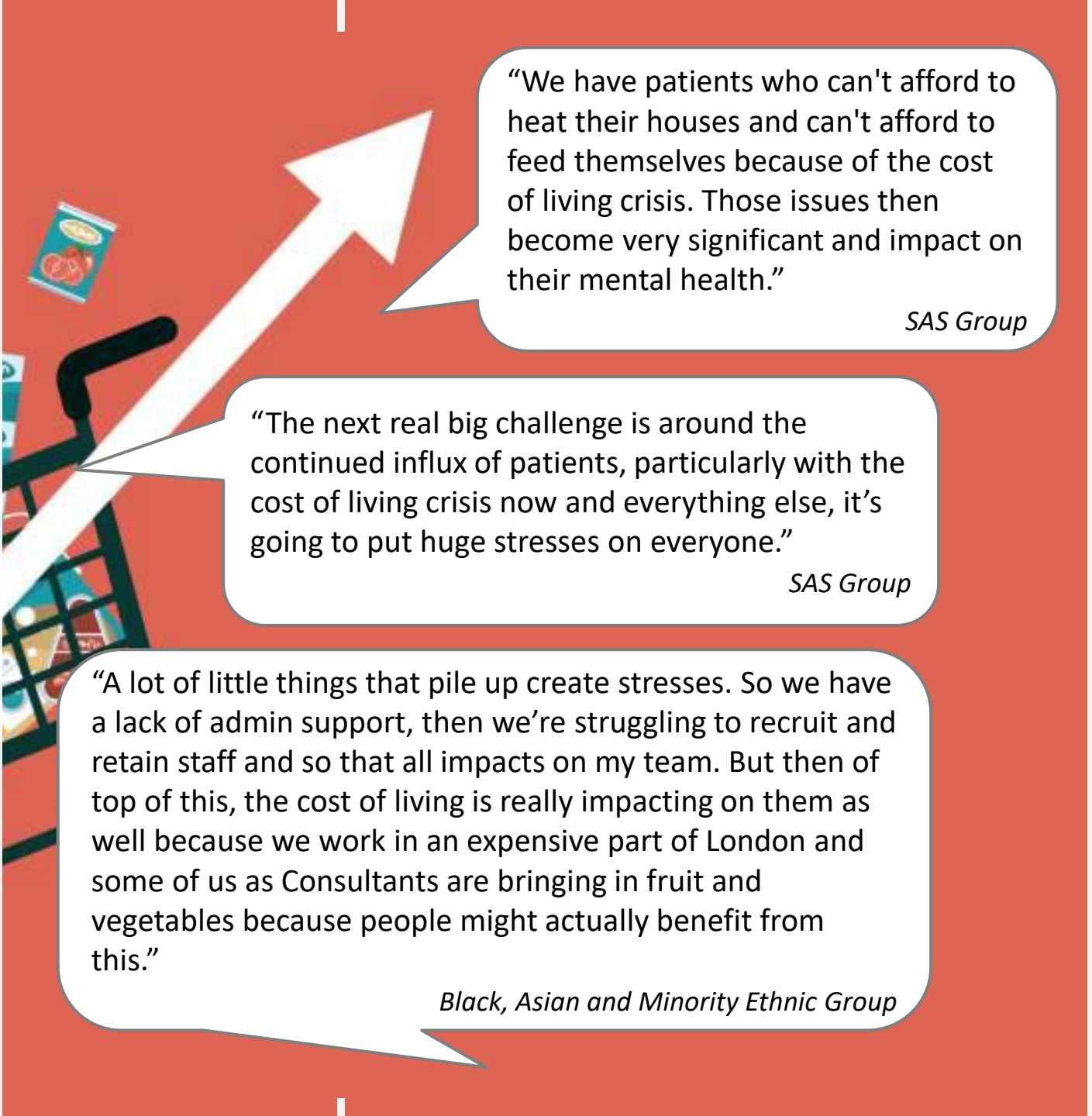
- During the 2022 focus groups, it was clear that **working conditions have become significantly worse**. Participants spoke a lot upfront about the working conditions and it was difficult to encourage members to move on from this topic, with everyone wanting to talk through their own particular situation. This was different from 2021.
- The fact that the situation has worsened was evident from one participant who had recently **changed post in order to escape the ever increasing workload**.

“I’ve actually changed post as a result [of the working environment] and during the last few months of my last role what kept me going was the knowledge that I was changing posts, that I was able to drop a day [in my new role], and pursue other interests of mine.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

2022





The situation and stresses in the workplace are further exacerbated by the current **cost of living crisis**. This not only negatively impacts the wellbeing of psychiatrists, but is also likely to **increase the demand for psychiatric services** within the UK, and in turn add to already full workloads.

“We have patients who can't afford to heat their houses and can't afford to feed themselves because of the cost of living crisis. Those issues then become very significant and impact on their mental health.”

SAS Group

“The next real big challenge is around the continued influx of patients, particularly with the cost of living crisis now and everything else, it's going to put huge stresses on everyone.”

SAS Group

“A lot of little things that pile up create stresses. So we have a lack of admin support, then we're struggling to recruit and retain staff and so that all impacts on my team. But then of top of this, the cost of living is really impacting on them as well because we work in an expensive part of London and some of us as Consultants are bringing in fruit and vegetables because people might actually benefit from this.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

Perceptions of the College



Overall perceptions of the College are positive, with members citing a range of areas where the College is having a positive impact



ED&I is an area in which the College is recognised as continuing to excel. Many in the groups cite how the College stays up-to-date on the current issues that impact its members.



Upholding the values and standards within the profession continues to be widely regarded as one of the College's primary roles.



Conferences and College events are well regarded and seen as a critical way for the College to touch upon important topics and stay engaged with members.



Descriptions of the College generally reference it as being 'welcoming' and 'inclusive'.



Online courses and resources are praised for being a useful and accessible way of engaging with the College.

"I think they are quite welcoming, inclusive. They have got standards, obviously. And I think that's important. But as long as you're prepared to do the work and meet the requirements, I think they're very inclusive, and welcoming, and open."

SAS Group



"They are up to date with what's happening, latest developments and everything. So yeah, overall, my perception has been more positive in the last one year, I'll say."

Trainee Group



Perceptions of the College tend to be more positive amongst those who engage with the College regularly.



Those more engaged with the College tend to hold more positive views and vice versa, highlighting the importance of **making sure members know how to get involved.**

Retaining connections with members who disengage with the College is also critical.

“My perception has been more positive because of the role that I've had within the College. However, I think if I didn't have the role with the College, I probably wouldn't necessarily know what they were doing.”

Trainee Group



Those outside of London - and particularly those working in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland - **typically rely upon online interaction** with the College to get involved. Ensuring all members can access College benefits, whether that be online or in-person, will help reinforce positive perceptions.

“I find it really helpful that a lot of the conferences and training have been online [from the pandemic], because I can't just hop on the train to go down to London and pay for a hotel.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



Members who feel informed are typically happiest with the College overall. **Communications to members are more important than ever.**

Creating multiple platforms to engage, alongside clarity of messaging, will increase the College's opportunities to reach members.

“There have been lots of issues the College has picked up on in recent times and that were really good, but the messaging from the College, especially around the vote, hasn't been the best at times.”

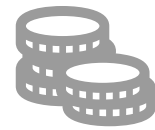
Trainee Group

Cost has started to emerge as a factor preventing higher levels of interaction with the College; members are looking to the College to do more to ensure members are still able to access their benefits.

Travel

Rising costs for travel have made travelling into London for College events a less appealing prospect for many.

“Include all those people who were excluded previously from College events and votes because they can’t afford the travel into London.”
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



Childcare

The costs associated with childcare prevent some from being able to engage with the College as much as they would like.

“If they are face-to-face conferences, organising creche facilities or offering more opportunities for trainees or non consultant grades to attend some conferences.”
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

“Things that can happen online, should happen online and in-person where possible.”
Trainees Group

Alternative ways to engage

A return to more in-person events does not suit all members and there is a proportion who want the College to continue offering a more robust online selection.

Temporary cost reduction

Some want the College to consider a reduction in cost for College events / conferences to allow a greater number of members to participate.

“I think the College could potentially do more for trainees and perhaps non consulting grades in terms of costs, such as temporary reductions of costs of College events for these groups.”
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



In the 2021 Member Research project, 'diverse' and 'inclusive' were in the most selected words used to describe the College, with 'diverse' the most popular.

2021

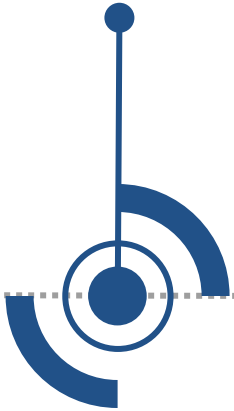
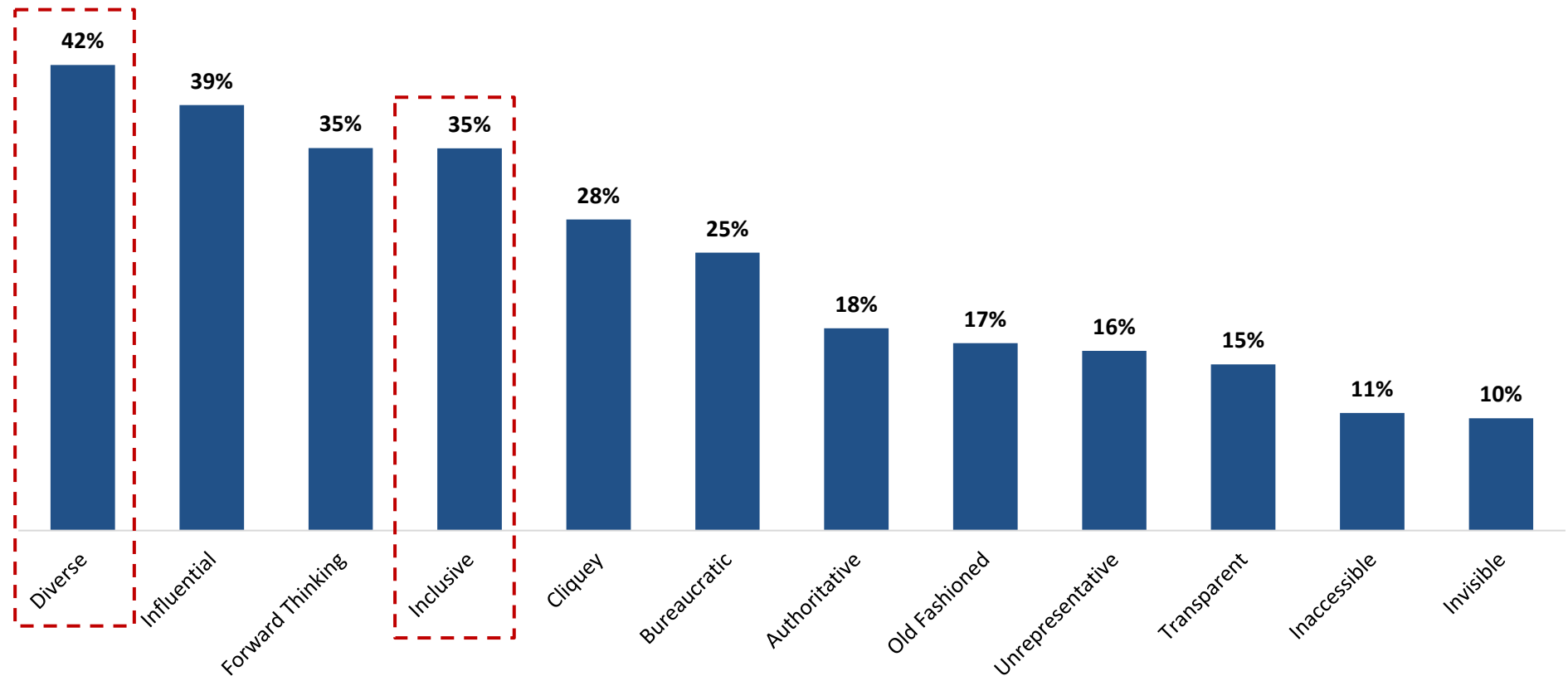


Chart extract from the 2021 Member Research Report on **words used to best describe the RCPsych.**

Which of the following words or phrases would you use to best describe the RCPsych?



Whilst Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and Trainee groups were both in agreement with the statements mentioned in the member research, the SAS respondents were more polarised and tended to either strongly agree or strongly disagree.

2021

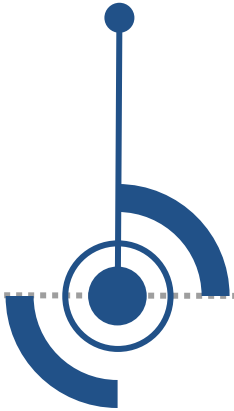
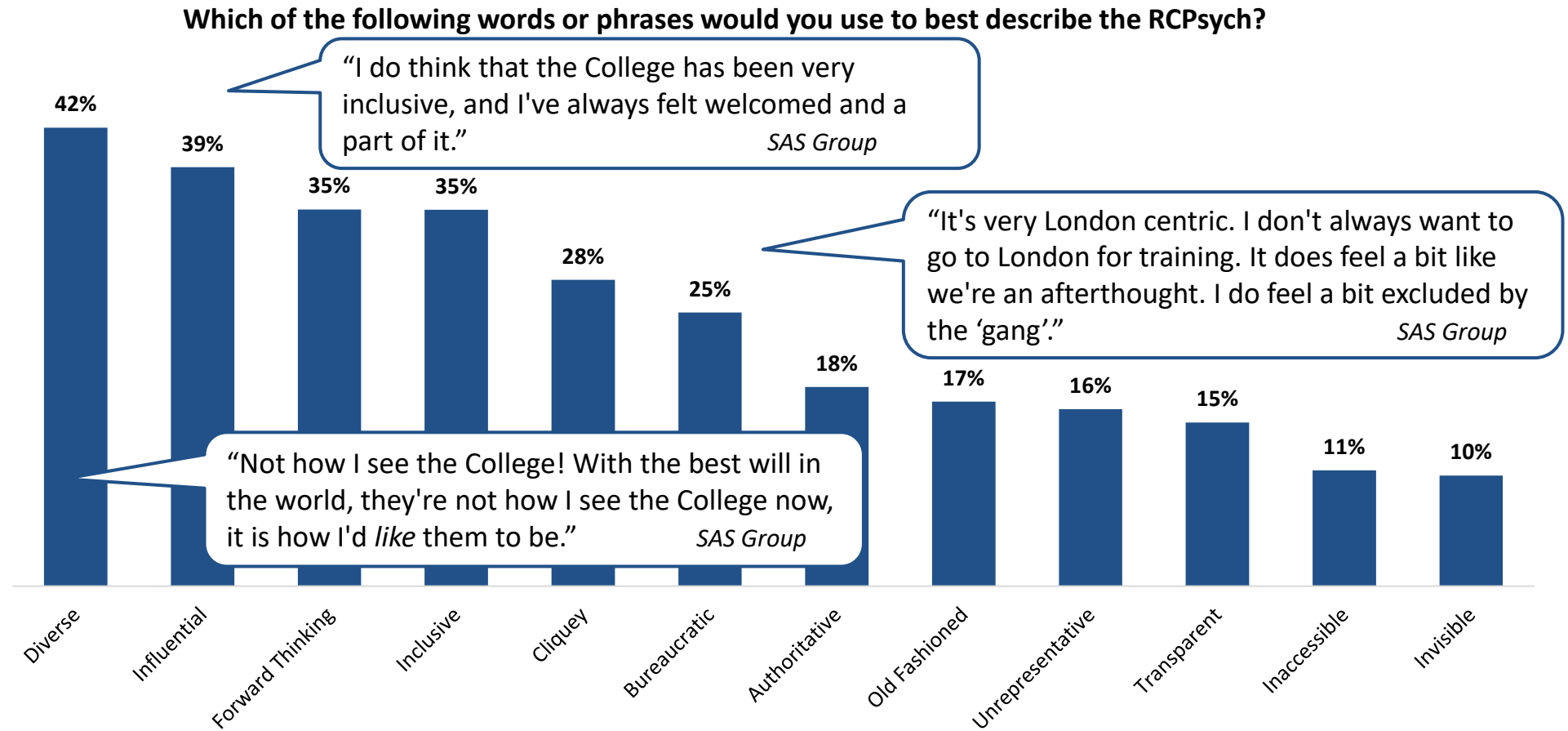
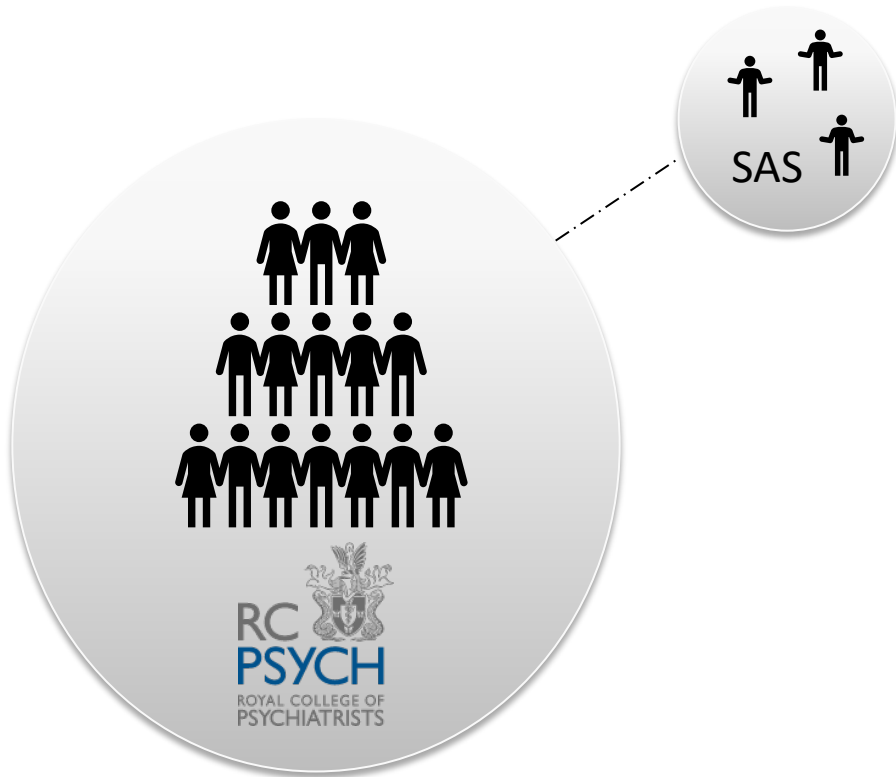


Chart extract from the 2021 Member Research Report on **words used to best describe the RCPsych.**



...which ultimately may negatively impact perceptions of the College being inclusive.



“We're working with a lot of SAS doctors who have a huge clinical contribution, and should be allowed to have a voice. I think they are the **more ethnically diverse group**. So that if you deny them that voice you're also almost denying the ethnicity of a voice as well.”

SAS Group

“**SAS is very over represented with doctors from abroad**, very over represented with **elderly geriatric trainees**, like me, and from an **ethnic minority** kind of point of view too you've got a lot of people in the SAS group who are over represented. There's not many young, white psychiatrists ending up in the SAS group. **If you don't address how you treat the SAS group, you're automatically failing on any kind of diversity thing.**”

SAS Group

In the 2021 member survey, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members were significantly more likely to describe RCPsych as 'diverse', and significantly less likely to describe RCPsych as 'cliquey'.

2021

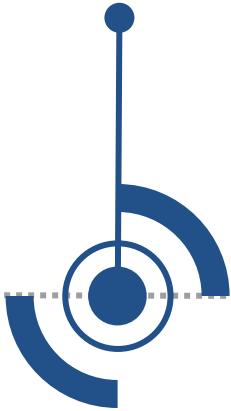
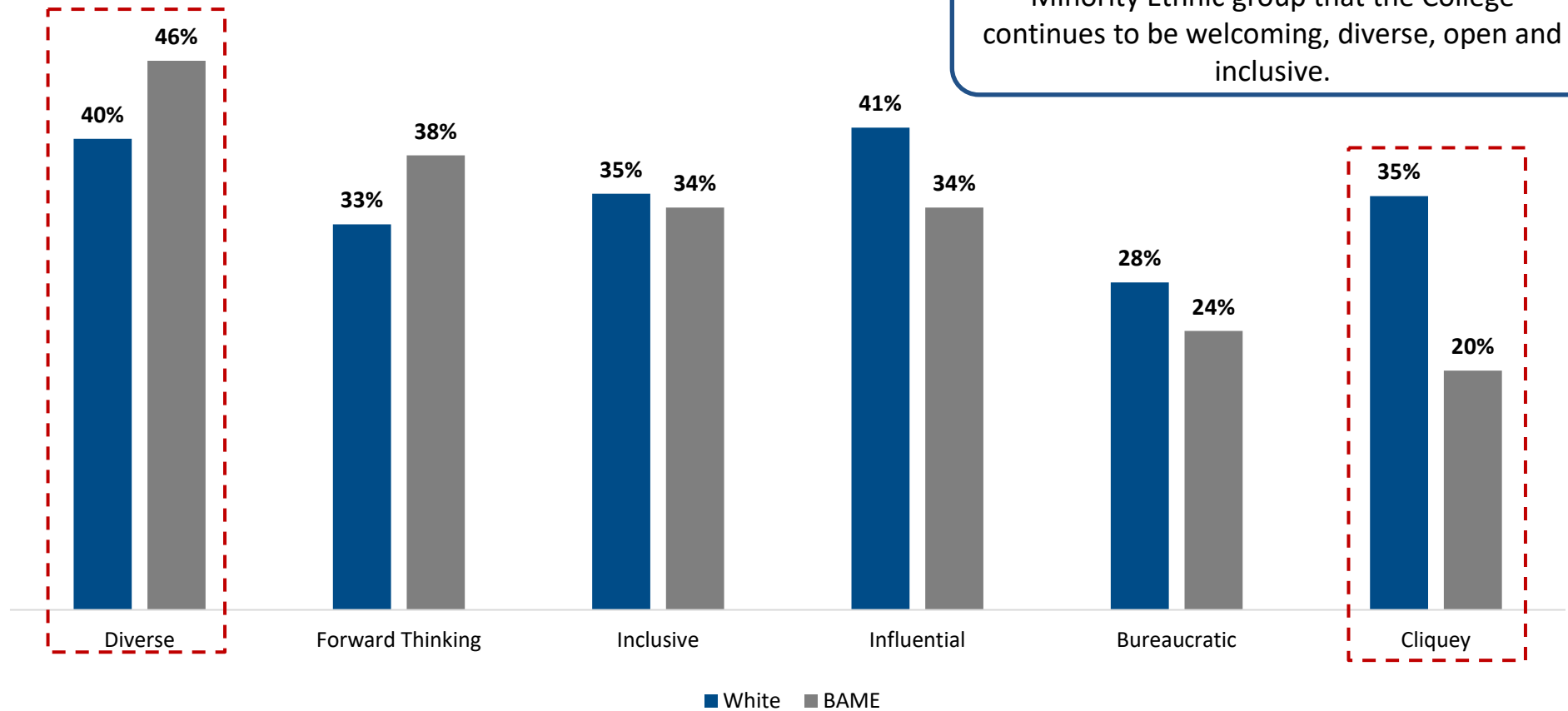


Chart extract from the 2021 Member Research Report on **words used to best describe the RCPsych.**

Which of the following words or phrases would you use to best describe the RCPsych? (Top 6 by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Members)
By Ethnicity

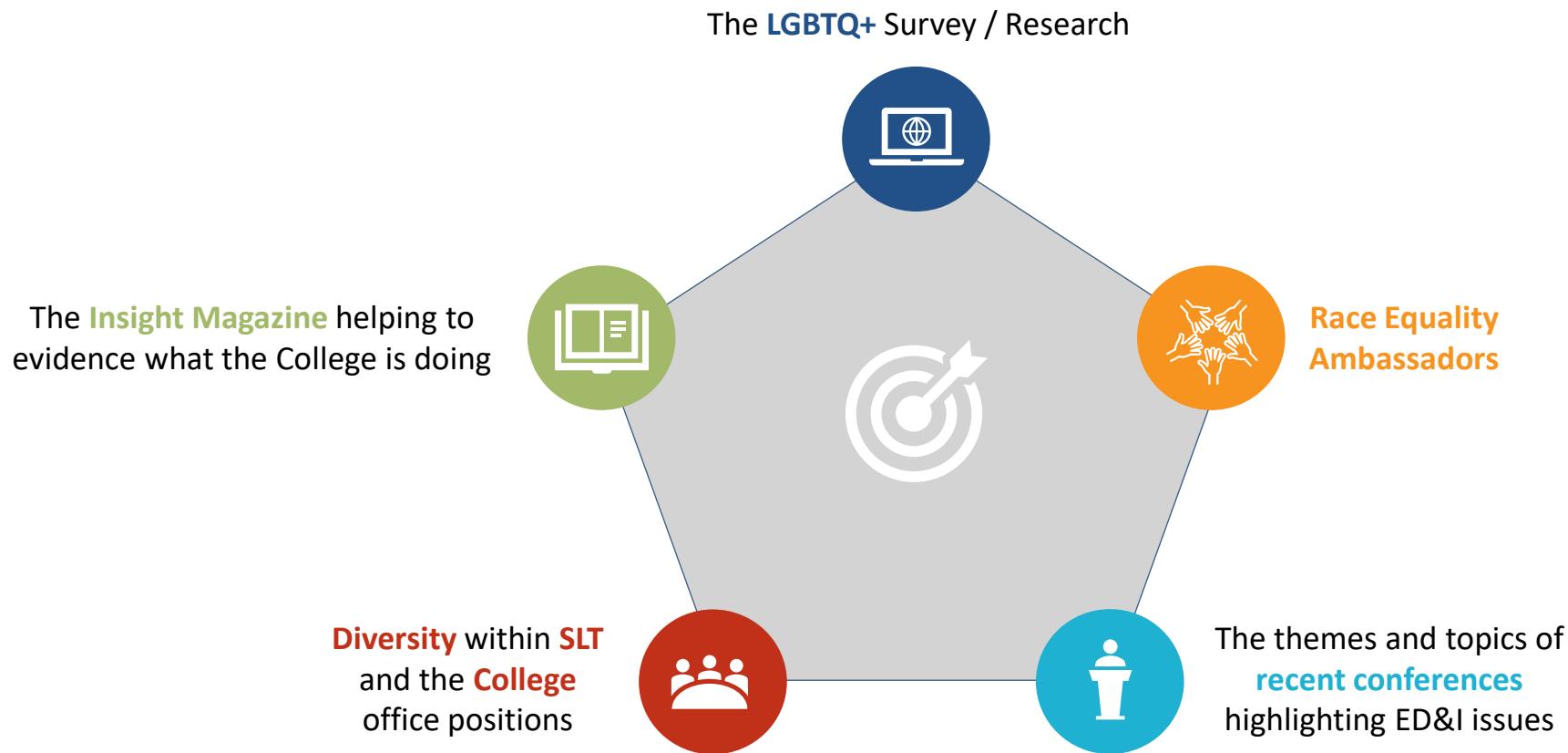


It was echoed throughout the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group that the College continues to be welcoming, diverse, open and inclusive.

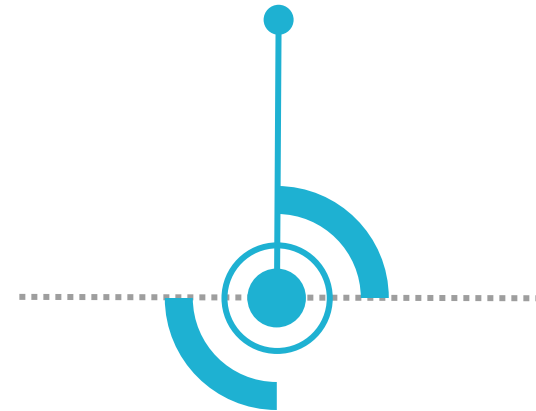
Q10. Which of the following words or phrases would you use to best describe the RCPsych? Base: White (1,971 respondents); Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (1,277 respondents). 2021 Member Research Project.

Fast forward to 2022 and the College generally continues to strengthen this perception of diversity and inclusivity through organising topical events and activities, as well as being vocal on these issues

- During the focus groups it was evident that the College has continued to uphold perceptions of being 'diverse' and 'inclusive', cited contributors to this include:



2022



It is clear from the focus groups that **being transparent** and **providing evidence** as to what the College is doing is key to maintaining these positive perceptions.

Fast forward to 2022 and the College generally continues to strengthen this perception of diversity and inclusivity through organising topical events and activities, as well as being vocal on these issues

2022

"I read the Insight magazine and there's some really cool stuff, like they're thinking about the environment, thinking about race, thinking about violence, and they're doing really cool stuff."

Trainee Group

"I thought there was one particularly that sticks in my mind about sexuality, and you know, have you experienced discrimination... it feels like stuff is happening!"

SAS Group

The **LGBTQ+** Survey / Research

"They've appointed race equality ambassadors; they make very strong statements compared to other Colleges. And I think that makes me feel like I have a place in RCPsych to have something to contribute."

Trainee Group

The **Insight Magazine** helping to evidence what the College is doing

"Having a gay Indian President, probably about 15 years ago now, shows the College is really progressive, I think it was really significant, it was really ahead of the curve."

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group

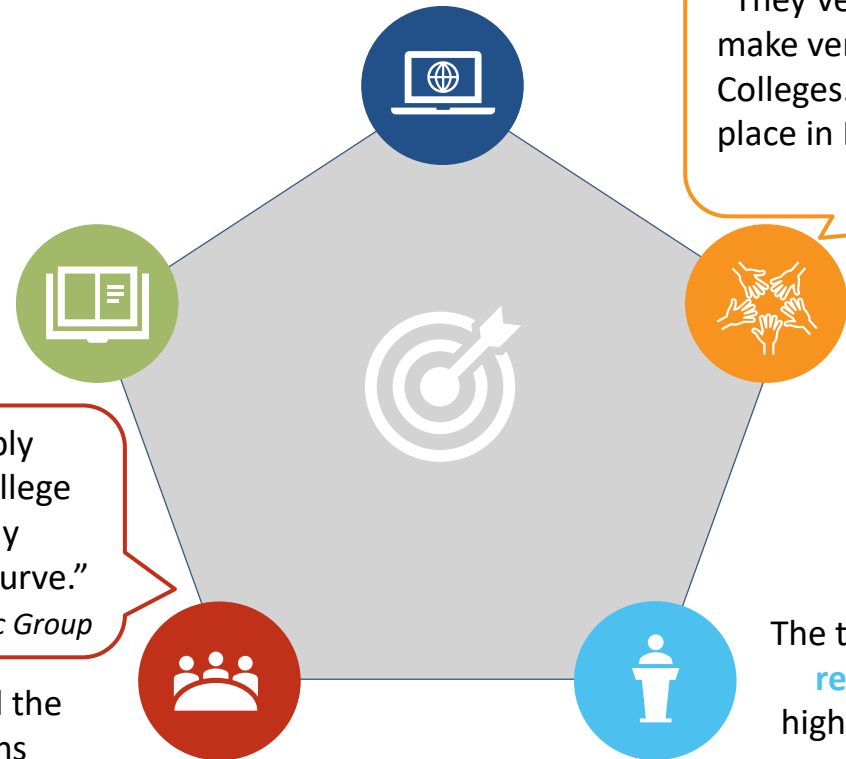
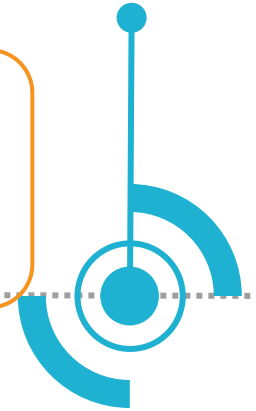
Diversity within **SLT** and the **College** office positions

Mentions of **Race Equality Ambassadors**

The themes and topics of **recent conferences** highlighting ED&I issues

"I went to a conference in London and they had experts from all over the place in all sorts of different areas and it was really inspiring."

SAS Group



Being transparent and evidence-based has enabled the RCPsych to maintain and enhance its reputation for being diverse and inclusive. However some areas were mentioned which still require attention.



The College should continue its good work in ED&I by pushing further and being vocal on **differential attainment**.

This may include addressing issues around recruitment in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups but also those with disabilities and International Medical Graduates.

“There's some really good work going on, but there's still quite a significant gap that I think could be reduced.”

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



Inclusion in the College needs to go **beyond protected characteristics** and extended to working hours and role, specifically those working LTFT and SAS Doctors.

As workload and conditional pressures increase, there is a need for the College to ensure these groups do not feel marginalised.

“Many LTFT workers are female or have other health needs and it can feel like we are not able to do what we need to do to become a Fellow or reach our goals.”

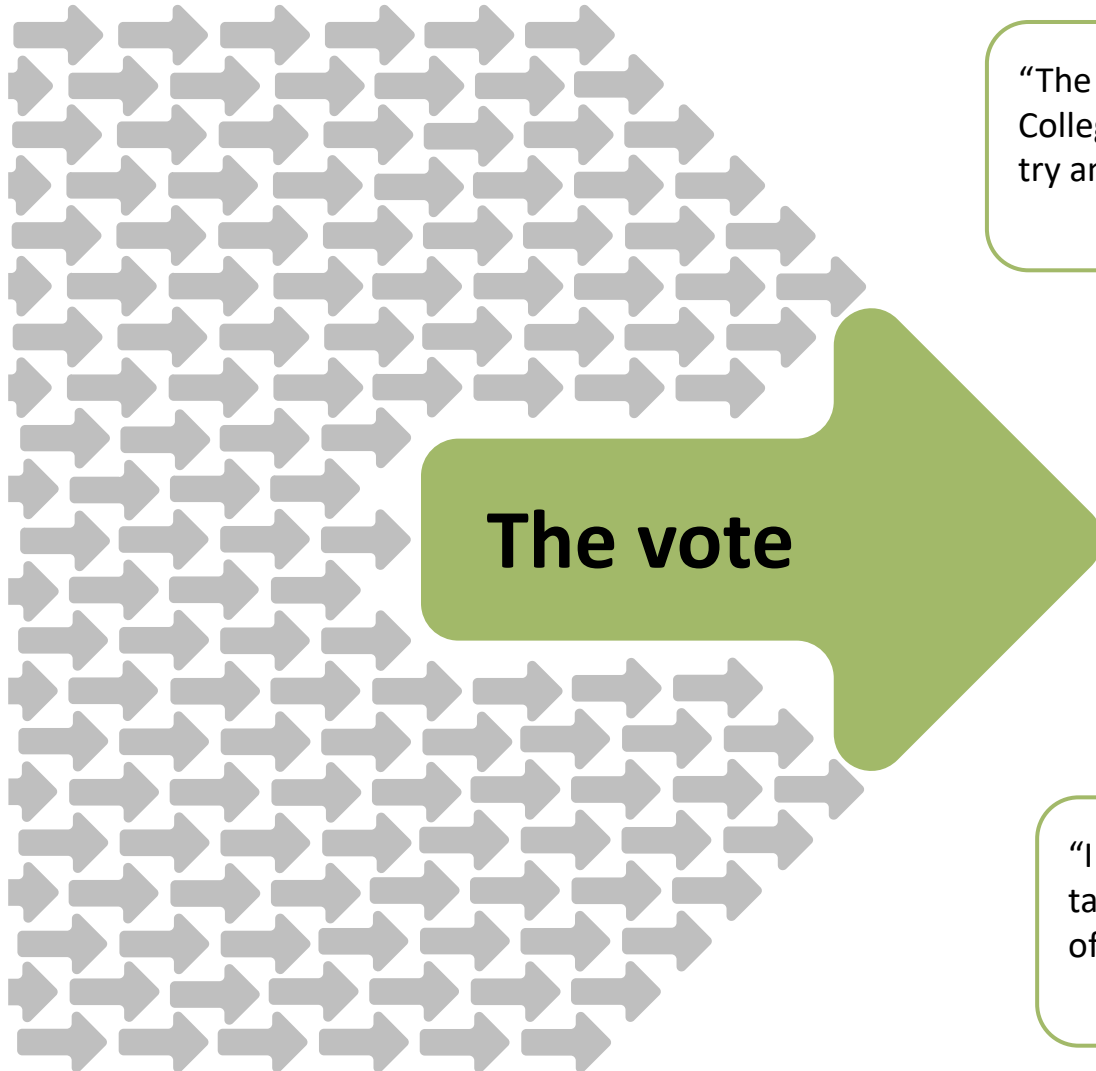
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Group



Voting Rights



Initial responses to the proposal of extending voting rights to SAS Doctors were positive with all groups acknowledging the College as taking a step in the right direction.



“The vote about allowing us to vote in in things, that felt positive, the fact that the College actually tried... they had tried, and they called another special meeting to try and get it through again... it was a positive change.”

SAS Group

- The decision to put extension of voting rights to SAS Doctors to the vote was initially **well-received**, particularly by the SAS group.
- This move also further **strengthened the perception of the College being inclusive and open to change**, something which was agreed within all 3 focus groups.

“I spoke to some more senior members of the College, and they were very keen to talk to specialty doctors and find out how everybody was doing. So, there was a lot of engagement really. So yeah, that was all positive.”

SAS Group

Despite initial reactions being positive, upon reflection this vote highlighted to SAS Doctors the issues that they are currently facing within the College and the profession more broadly.

"The College showed quite a bad face that day, which actually upset me more than if they'd not done it in the first place. It reminded me that I can't vote and that I don't have any decision making, and yeah, the group of SAS Doctors felt really hurt."

SAS Group

- Informing SAS Doctors that they do not currently have the right to vote reinforced feelings of being 'second-class citizens' and that they were **outsiders** to the rest of the College.
- Furthermore, the negative reaction from some of the rest of the membership, on platforms such as Twitter, **furthered this feeling of 'us and them'** for those in the SAS group. **Messaging from the College was perceived to reiterate this point.**

"The College were very keen to reassure our old school consultant colleagues, 'don't worry, they'll never be real members.'"

SAS Group

"Just the way the College talks about us, saying about this homogenous group of specialty doctors, but it really isn't a homogenous group...I don't just want a little badge that says I am allowed to be respected, it needs to be a cultural shift."

SAS Group



The vote