



# **YAS Equality Support Networks Annual Progress Report**

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**June 2025**

## Board Summary: Equality Support Networks

The Equality Support Networks at Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust (YAS) continue to play a vital role in supporting an inclusive, equitable, and progressive organisational culture. These staff-led groups are aligned with the Trust's values and wider diversity and inclusion objectives, with a focus on promoting wellbeing, representation, and a sense of belonging across the workforce.

Each network is at a different stage of maturity and faces distinct challenges. Board Sponsors and Champions have provided critical support, although their input has understandably varied based on the differing needs and priorities of each network. Recent leadership changes in the Race Equality Network (REN) and Pride@YAS have brought renewed energy, resulting in increased visibility and improved engagement within both groups. The Armed Forces Network has also undergone a leadership transition, which is expected to support progress toward achieving Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) accreditation. However, there remains a clear need to reset, refresh, and reinforce structural support, particularly for Pride@YAS and the Disability Support Network, to address challenges that have become more pronounced over the past year.

Despite efforts to enhance development, such as training opportunities offered in collaboration with the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (SY ICB) and access to the Diversity & Health Partnership Programme, take-up has been low. Feedback indicates that members continue to struggle to secure time away from operational roles, which has had a particularly detrimental effect on REN and Pride@YAS, where many members come from frontline services.

Further, while each network is allocated a £1,000 annual budget to support activities, this has been flagged as insufficient to meet growing demands. Given the Trust's current financial constraints, addressing this funding gap remains a challenge.

### Summary of Key Issues:

- Variable levels of engagement due to differing maturity and needs across networks.
- Positive momentum in REN and Pride@YAS, following leadership changes, now requires structured follow-up and support.
- Operational demands continue to limit staff participation, especially from frontline roles.
- Underutilisation of external development offers due to time constraints and capacity.
- Budget limitations constrain the ability of networks to plan and deliver meaningful activity.

### Next Steps (for consideration):

- Review and strengthen support mechanisms for network leaders, including time allocation and development access.
- Explore options to enhance engagement from operational staff, including line manager support and protected time.
- Evaluate funding structures in line with network ambitions and organisational priorities.

# Armed Forces Network

Reporting Year: 2024/25

## 1. Leadership and Governance

- **Chair:** Christopher Hackett, Senior Clinical Advisor (Paramedic).
- **Deputy Chair:** Philip Hardwick, Performance Improvement Manager.
- **Executive Sponsor:** Dave Green, Executive Director of Quality and Chief Paramedic.
- **Board Champion:** None appointed

## 2. Overview of Purpose and Aims

The Armed Forces Network provides a supportive platform for staff with military backgrounds, reservists, veterans, and their allies across the organisation. Its key aims include promoting recognition of armed forces personnel within YAS, supporting the transition of service leavers into the Trust, and advocating for improved understanding and support of issues affecting the armed forces community. The network aligns with organisational values by fostering inclusivity, championing diversity, and enhancing staff wellbeing, particularly for those with military links.

## 3. Network Membership

- **Total Number of Members:** Approximately 80–90
- 65 members responded to the network's annual survey, indicating strong engagement. However, the overall membership is estimated to be higher based on participation in online platforms and network events.

## 4. Summary of Activity in 2024/25

### Key Activities:

- Hosted a **Remembrance Day event** at Springhill
- Participated in **Commonwealth Remembrance Day** at Wakefield Cenotaph
- Marked the **VE Day 80th Anniversary** in Wakefield
- Launched a **Facebook Q&A page** to engage members
- Created an official Network WhatsApp group
- Distributed a network questionnaire to gather member feedback and priorities
- Continued use and growth of the Facebook group to share updates and build community

### Progress Overview:

Priority	Progress Summary	Status
<b>Prepare for YAS Remembrance Day Parade</b>	Planning to begin in August/September 2025	In Progress
<b>EOC Armed Forces Recruitment Campaign</b>	Initial stages underway, review meeting set for July 2025	In Progress
<b>Work towards Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Standard</b>	Long-term goal, groundwork laid and Defence Employer Recognition Silver Award achieved – valid for 5 years.	In Progress
<b>Armed Forces Community Health</b>	Continued development and engagement on health-related issues within the armed forces community	In Progress

<b>Reservist/Special Leave Policy Amendment</b>	Ongoing discussions regarding increase from 2 to 3 weeks for deployment/operational reasons	In Progress
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#### **Notable Achievements:**

- Strengthened digital communication through new platforms (Facebook Q&A, WhatsApp)
- Increased visibility of the network across multiple sites
- Active engagement in high-profile commemorative events
- Strong collaboration and feedback through surveys and informal engagement

#### **5. Priorities for 2025/26**

- **Support Transition for Service Leavers:** Collaborate with organisations such as *Step Into Health* to assist military personnel transitioning into YAS
- **Policy Support:** Provide tailored support to network members navigating existing policies and advocating for necessary amendments
- **Engagement and Visibility:** Continue building on 2024/25 efforts to increase visibility through frequent updates, events, and outreach activities

#### **6. Additional Notes or Support Required from the Board**

- **Policy Review Support:** Support to review and amend leave policies for reservists, increasing deployment allowance from 2 to 3 weeks
- **Transition Partnerships:** Continued support with forming partnerships with organisations like *Step Into Health* to aid veteran recruitment
- **Increased Visibility:** Greater board presence and advocacy for the Armed Forces Network would enhance staff engagement and reinforce the Trust's commitment
- **Sponsorship Engagement:** A more visible connection with senior leadership would further legitimise the network's efforts and amplify its impact across the organisation

*End of Report*

**Submitted by:** Armed Forces Network Steering Group

**Reporting Period:** April 2024 – March 2025

# Disability Support Network

Reporting Year: 2024/25

## 1. Leadership and Governance

- **Chair:** Steve Hudson, Associate Ambulance Practitioner / Community Defib Trainer
- **Deputy Chair:** Chris Sythes, PTS Systems Administrator
- **Executive Sponsor:** Nick Smith, Chief Operating Officer, A&E Operations
- **Board Champion:** Amanda Moat, Non-Executive Director

## 2. Overview of Purpose and Aims

The Disability Support Network supports staff living with disabilities across the organisation, advocating for inclusive practices, accessibility, and equitable support. Our aim is to create an environment where staff with disabilities feel empowered, understood, and equipped to thrive. The network serves as a safe space for collaboration, solution-building, and championing technological and policy innovations that promote inclusion and wellbeing.

## 3. Network Membership

**Total Number of Members:** 100

- A major improvement this year has been the introduction of a streamlined membership onboarding process: staff can now complete a form to be automatically added to the DSN Microsoft Teams group. This automation, implemented through Microsoft Power Automate, has significantly reduced manual workload and errors, while centralising member data in an accessible format.

## 4. Summary of Activity in 2024/25

**Key Activities:**

- **Copilot Rollout:** DSN has played an active role in trialling and implementing Microsoft Copilot, supporting inclusive tech use. Thanks are extended to Chloe and her team for their significant assistance.
- **VR Exploration:** VR headsets are being explored as tools for calming sensory spaces, training simulations, and orientation aids. Though current access is limited, the potential benefits are notable.
- **Individual Support:** Continued focus on one-to-one staff support, ranging from basic signposting to navigating complex accessibility issues.

**Priority Progress Overview:**

Priority Area	Progress Summary	Status
Network Efficiency	Automated the membership process via Microsoft Power Automate, reducing manual input and improving data management.	Completed

<b>Collaboration with IPAD and HR</b>	Partnered with IPAD for assistive hardware/software and with HR on enhancing the Reasonable Adjustment Policy. Significant time commitment from DSN leads.	In Progress
<b>Staff Support and Advocacy</b>	Continued individual staff support, including signposting and complex case support. Actively involved in Copilot technology roll-out.	Ongoing
<b>Innovation: VR Integration</b>	Launched VR initiative using Meta Quest headsets to support staff with ADHD, autism, dyspraxia, visual impairments, and learning differences. Developed concepts for safe VR spaces and virtual site tours.	In Progress
<b>Funding Challenges</b>	Despite strong departmental support, a £1,000 budget request was declined by the finance panel, citing existing VR resources (which remain inaccessible to DSN).	Deferred

## 5. Priorities for 2025/26

Looking ahead, the DSN will continue to focus on innovation, inclusion, and advocacy through the following strategic objectives:

### Improve access to assistive tech

- Increase visibility and usage of VR headsets and accessibility tools for neurodivergent and visually impaired staff.
- Pilot a VR “Safe Space” and immersive onboarding through calming VR environments and 360° site tours to support wellbeing and orientation.

### Increase network engagement

- Enhance visibility through internal comms, events, and campaigns to drive active participation.

### Influence and support policy

- Propose reforms to SOPs and scripts to improve staff safety and inclusion during high-stress incidents.
- Strengthen Reasonable Adjustment processes, working with HR/IT to streamline and improve timely delivery of workplace accommodations.

## 6. Additional Notes or Support Required from the Board

While we are proud of the progress made this year, there remain critical challenges requiring Board-level support:

- **VR Accessibility:** Access to VR headsets in the Academy, is not exclusive to the DSN, network funding has limited the capacity to improve technology for disabled colleagues.

- **Sensory Support & Crisis Response:** organisational commitment to ensure appropriate support for sensory crises, including the provision of tools and designated spaces.
- **Policy Adjustments:** support for proposed changes to scripts and SOPs in remote patient care specifically, revising procedures to offer only one warning to abusive/discriminatory callers, reducing staff exposure to repeated harm.
- **Recruitment and Career Progression:** Board support to implement interview preparation and application workshops specifically designed for disabled staff, enabling them to confidently navigate processes related to career development.

We also extend sincere gratitude to Nick Smith and Amanda Moat for their ongoing support and engagement with the network.

*End of Report*

**Submitted by:** Disability Support Network

**Reporting Period:** April 2024 – March 2025

# Pride @YAS (LGBT+)

**Reporting Year: 2024/25**

## 1. Leadership and Governance

- **Chair:** Mark Jaggar, Events and Commercial Services Manager
- **Deputy Chair:** Dave Kirk, Dispatcher - Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)
- **Executive Sponsor:** Adam Layland, Director of Partnerships and Operations
- **Board Champion:** Andrew Chang, Non-Executive Director

## 2. Overview of Purpose and Aims

Pride@YAS is the LGBT+ staff network within Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, its overarching purpose is to:

- Support LGBT+ staff by creating a safe, inclusive, and visible environment.
- Amplify voices of LGBT+ colleagues across all levels of the Trust.
- Align with YAS values contributing directly to the Trust's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy

The network is recognised as a key contributor to organisational culture and staff wellbeing, with its work embedded in both operational and strategic planning.

## 3. Network Membership

- **Total Number of Members:** Not formally recorded
- 300 members actively engaged in events

## 4. Summary of Activity in 2024/25

### People & Inclusion:

- Leadership Transition and Network Development
- Refresh of network aims and objectives, with focus on Trans and Bisexual inclusion and clinical education (e.g. Chem Sex awareness)
- Ongoing one-to-one support for Trans and Non-Binary staff (e.g. name changes, IT system updates)
- Advice and advocacy regarding access to inclusive facilities (e.g. in the Emergency Operations Centre)
- Engaged in Estates & Facilities Review for input into Trust-wide toilet provision following Supreme Court ruling
- Advocacy for conversion of single-user toilets to gender-neutral spaces with appropriate privacy
- Supporting YAS Academy in delivering LGBT+ awareness and inclusive education
- Continued promotion and embedding of Trans Guidance for Staff and Patients



## Priority Progress Overview:

Priority Area	Progress Summary	Status
<b>Leadership &amp; Network Development</b>	Interim Chair appointed (Mark Jaggar). Aims and objectives refreshed to include clinical focus (e.g. Chem Sex) and support for Trans and Bisexual staff.	In Progress
<b>Staff Support &amp; Inclusion</b>	Ongoing support for Trans and Non-Binary staff with system access, name changes, and facility-related queries. Growing visibility across the Trust.	In Progress
<b>Member Engagement</b>	July meeting held to co-develop priorities. Positive engagement and feedback collected to shape future direction.	In Progress
<b>Estates &amp; Facilities (Inclusion)</b>	Input provided to Trust-wide toilet review post-Supreme Court ruling. Gender-neutral toilet recommendations shared; investment needs raised at TEG.	In Progress
<b>Community Engagement (Pride Events)</b>	YAS represented at multiple regional Pride events (York, Leeds, Hull, Wakefield, Doncaster). First-time attendance at Doncaster Pride with National Ambulance LGBT+ Network.	Achieved
<b>Internal LGBT+ Visibility Days</b>	LGBT+ Day held across three sites (Springhill HQ, Callflex, York) with stalls, literature, and merchandise.	Achieved
<b>External Partnerships</b>	New partnership with <i>Rainbow Families Yorkshire</i> offering grants, workshops, and resources to network members and wider staff.	In Progress
<b>Inclusive Training &amp; Guidance</b>	Continued support for embedding the Trans Guidance for Staff and Patients. Collaboration with YAS Academy to strengthen LGBT+ inclusive training.	In Progress

## 5. Priorities for 2025/26

Pride@YAS will continue to align its work with the Trust's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, focusing on four strategic pillars:

### Tackling Health Inequalities

- Host guest speakers on LGBT+ health, with a focus on intersectionality and mental health.
- Collaborate with internal wellbeing teams to assess and improve support for LGBT+ colleagues.
- Share inclusive care resources to support frontline staff.

### Staff Education

- Develop and promote accessible training on LGBT+ inclusion.
- Embed LGBT+ awareness into induction and CPD programmes.

- Produce guides, videos, and real-life stories to humanise inclusion.

### **Staff Engagement**

- Deliver events around key awareness dates (e.g. Pride Month, Trans Day of Visibility).
- Facilitate safe spaces for LGBT+ staff to connect and share experiences.
- Offer hybrid meetings to ensure accessibility across the Trust.

### **Celebrating Differences**

- Share stories from across the network to highlight diversity within YAS.
- Maintain a strong presence at regional Pride events, including Hull Pride 2025.
- Refresh the Pride@YAS Pulse Page with updated imagery and leadership video content.

## **6. Additional Notes or Support Required from the Board**

Over the past year, Pride@YAS has made significant strides in visibility, engagement, and education. However, several challenges persist that could limit the network's growth and impact without senior-level support:

- **Funding Constraints:** Internal funding delays forced reliance on external sponsorship for Leeds Pride 2025, exposing risks to event sustainability.
- **Leadership Transition:** Leadership change following Chair's resignation highlights the need for structured succession planning and leadership support.
- **Comms and Visibility:** Improved collaboration with Communications Team, but network visibility across Trust platforms remains inconsistent; content updates are needed to realign the network and changes.
- **Allyship and Inclusion:** Allyship training valued but uptake uneven; embedding into mandatory training and leadership development is recommended.

*End of Report*

**Submitted by:** Pride@YAS

**Reporting Period:** July 2024 - March 2025

# Race and Ethnicity Network (REN)

Reporting Year: 2024/25

## 1. Leadership and Governance

- **Chair:** Humera Mushtaq, Mental Health Educator
- **Deputy Chair:** Shamaila Nizami, IUC Non-Clinical Team Leader
- **Executive Sponsor:** Jeevan Gill, Director of Partnerships and Operations
- **Board Champion:** Andrew Chang, Non-Executive Director

## 2. Overview of Purpose and Aims

The Race and Ethnicity Network (REN) provides a safe and supportive space for ethnic minority colleagues and allies to embrace diversity and promote inclusivity across the Trust. The network seeks to improve organisational culture by sharing lived experiences, identifying and addressing barriers, supporting colleagues, and enhancing patient care and community engagement. REN focuses on four key themes which include career progression, creating a culture of psychological safety and inclusion and prioritising the health and wellbeing for ethnically diverse staff.

## 3. Network Membership

- **Total Number of Members:** 56  
REN membership has grown steadily, membership engagement in bimonthly meetings has generally increased since July 2024, coinciding with the new Chair and Deputy's tenure.
- Following a review of the previous opt-in process, the network agreed to revise the membership process to ensure greater accuracy. A new process has been introduced requiring completion of a Microsoft Joiner/Leaver Form, available via the network Pulse page.

## 4. Summary of Activity in 2024/25

### Key Activities:

- Nine Steering Group meetings (monthly from July 2024 to March 2025)
- Four bimonthly network meetings.
- One in-person network event plus multiple engagement activities.
- Collaborative visits with Women and Allies Network to Leeds and Bradford Hospitals via the welfare vehicle.
- Ten drop-in support sessions during and after the violent incidents in the UK (August 2024), including two sessions for allies.

### Priority Progress Overview:

Priority	Progress Summary	Status
<b>Reciprocal Mentoring</b>	Promoted reciprocal mentoring; 10 members participated. Complete, though unable to track all participants due to data restrictions.	Complete
<b>Anti-Racism</b>	Joined "Root Out Racism" campaign, shared actions and promotional materials. Launch delayed in South Yorkshire, ongoing for 2025/26.	In Progress
<b>Culture of inclusion (Language toolkit)</b>	Developed and launched toolkit in August 2024; feedback incorporated for patient-facing staff.	Complete

<b>Allyship promotion</b>	Participated in joint video campaign with staff networks.	Complete
<b>Cultural celebrations</b>	Celebrated Black History Month, Ramadan, South Asian Heritage Month with workshops, stalls, and educational activities. Collected participant feedback.	Complete
<b>Membership growth</b>	Engaged via multiple communication channels and events, increasing active membership.	Complete
<b>Staff health &amp; wellbeing</b>	Developed wellbeing survey focusing on global majority staff needs in collaboration with Health & Wellbeing team.	Complete

#### **Notable Achievements:**

- Positive member feedback indicating increased engagement and openness
- Successful in-person and virtual events
- Collaborative efforts with other staff networks to enhance reach and impact
- Responsive support during challenging periods of societal unrest

### **5. Priorities for 2025/26**

#### **Promote career progression for ethnically diverse staff**

- Improve competencies in application and interview processes to support career progression.
- Reduce barriers to progression into management/leadership roles with targeted support.

#### **Create a culture of psychological safety and accountability**

- Broaden cultural and religious literacy across the organisation via regular training sessions, awareness campaigns, and peer-led learning.
- Champion and support Trust-wide anti-racism initiatives by actively promoting Allyship and work collaboratively with Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to empower staff to safely report race-related incidents, ensuring prompt support and appropriate follow-up.

#### **Enabling a culture of Inclusion**

- Promote significant cultural days through a range of activities and help drive diverse recruitment.
- Working with teams across YAS to engage with the wider community including delivering basic life support training.

#### **Health and wellbeing**

- Engage staff across YAS and Emergency Departments, promoting wellbeing resources and listening to concerns during site visits.
- Review feedback from colleagues and implement actions to support health and wellbeing.

### **6. Additional Notes or Support Required from the Board**

- Support implementation of specific, staff-informed actions to improve equity in career development, access to opportunities, and workplace culture.
- Reaffirm the organisation's commitment to anti-racism as a core, strategic priority for sustained progress. Recognising persistent disparities in experiences between ethnically diverse and white staff, as highlighted by both data and lived experiences.
- Discussions are ongoing with Remote Patient Care to revise abusive caller scripts and SOPs to better protect staff from discrimination, including reducing patient warnings from two to one.

*End of Report*

**Submitted by:** Race and Ethnicity Network Steering Group

**Reporting Period:** July 2024 - March 2025

# Women's & Allies Network

**Reporting Year: 2024/25**

## 1. Leadership and Governance

- **Chair:** Dawn Adams, Associate Director of People Development
- **Deputy Chair:** Vicky Pickles, Health and Wellbeing Engagement Advisor
- **Executive Sponsor:** Kathryn Vause, Executive Director of Finance
- **Board Champion:** Anne Cooper, Non-Executive Director

## 2. Overview of Purpose and Aims

The Women and Allies' Network exists to provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive space for women, colleagues who identify as women, and male allies. The network's primary aim is to celebrate the achievements of women in the workplace and advocate for issues that either solely or disproportionately impact women within the Trust. It aligns with the organisation's strategy by promoting equality, fostering a positive workplace culture, and supporting the Trust's core values of respect, inclusivity, and staff wellbeing.

## 3. Network Membership

**Total Number of Members:** 258

The Women and Allies' Network continues to show steady membership growth and engagement, with an increase in participation through in-person events and virtual forums. The membership includes a diverse mix of operational and non-operational staff across various departments. A targeted communications effort has helped maintain visibility and encourage new sign-ups, particularly among frontline colleagues.

## 4. Summary of Activity in 2024/25

**Key Activities and Events:**

**Successful in-person events featuring guest speakers and interactive sessions.**

- These events have been well-attended and have included a variety of topics relevant to our staff. Guest speakers have shared their expertise, followed by interactive sessions where participants can ask questions and engage in discussions.

**New Parent Policy Support Webinars.**

- These webinars are designed to help new parents navigate the policies and benefits available to them. They cover topics such as parental leave, flexible working arrangements, and childcare support, providing valuable information and resources.

**"In the Spotlight" sessions highlighting colleague stories.**

- These sessions offered colleagues an opportunity to share their personal and professional experiences. By highlighting diverse stories, we aim to create a sense of community and inspire others within the organisation.

## **Regular Menopause Support drop-in sessions on Teams.**

- These drop-in sessions provide a safe space for employees experiencing menopause to seek support and advice. Hosted on Teams, they offer convenience and accessibility, allowing participants to join from anywhere.

## **Menopause Day awareness campaign, including a Trust-wide tour and a canteen stand.**

- The awareness campaign aims to educate staff about menopause and its impact. The Trust-wide tour included informational sessions and resource distribution across various sites, while the canteen stand offered literature and support material.

## **Promotion of menopause training on ESR via Team Brief with Peter Reading.**

- This initiative encourages staff to participate in menopause training available on the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). Promoted through the Team Brief with Peter Reading, it emphasised the importance of understanding and supporting colleagues going through menopause.

### **Progress Overview:**

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Progress Summary</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Promote NEW Parent Support and Flexible Working Policies</b>	Developed communication materials, gathered success stories, hosted drop-ins	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Champion career development</b>	Skills workshops and mentorship scheme promotion	<b>In Progress / Complete</b>
<b>Review Lone Working &amp; Personal Safety Guidance</b>	Input on guidance, explored training options	<b>Delayed / Complete</b>
<b>Promote sexual safety</b>	Engaged with national groups, promoted resources, participated in YAS group	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Utilise Women's Health Strategy</b>	Awareness on conditions, health passport promotion	<b>In Progress</b>
<b>Promote Menopause Policy &amp; Guidance</b>	Policy promotion, training identification, support group, accreditation support	<b>Complete / In Progress / Delayed</b>
<b>Promote Allyship</b>	Discussed in joint chairs meetings and agreed actions	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Increase Network awareness</b>	Events, book club, wellbeing vehicle visits, expanded comms plan	<b>In Progress / Complete</b>

## 5. Priorities for 2025/26

### Women's Progression

- **Understand Barriers:** Partner with YAS Academy to identify barriers for women aiming to become paramedics using surveys and focus groups.
- **Career Development:** Collaborate with Leadership and OD teams to promote mentorship and upskilling opportunities.

### Women's Safety

- **Violence & Aggression Reduction:** Promote safety policies and the new ESR e-learning module on sexual misconduct. Deepen understanding of lone working and the role of body-worn cameras.

### Women's Health

- **Fertility Support Group:** Launch and actively promote a fertility support group.
- **New Parent Support:** Promote expressing milk support and highlight locations with appropriate facilities.

### Engagement

- **Frontline Engagement:** Visit all core emergency departments to speak with staff and promote support tools.
- **Allyship:** Coordinate with other networks to provide inclusive guidance and joint events.

## 6. Additional Notes or Board Support Required

- **Uniform Equity:** Request Board support in liaising with the National Uniform Group to secure lightweight uniform options for Support Services colleagues experiencing menopause symptoms. Current policy limits the use of personal clothing, causing discomfort and potential absences.
- **Facilities for New Mothers:** Request assistance from Estates in identifying and designating private, safe spaces across the Trust for milk expression by new mothers returning to work.

*End of Report*

**Submitted by:** Women and Allies' Network Steering Group

**Reporting Period:** April 2024 – March 2025