

## DORCAS AKEJU OBE

Born in Nigeria, Dorcas Akeju has lived in Liverpool since 1974, and after training as a midwife at the Liverpool Maternity Hospital, she practised in both hospital and community settings for 35 years.

In 1999 she was instrumental in the establishment of a special clinic - "The Link" - to provide antenatal care for mothers whose first language is not English. This clinic continues to have an important impact on the care of these mothers.

Since 1990 Dorcas has been an active campaigner against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), both at local and national level. She contributed to the establishment of the Liverpool Multi-Cultural Women's Advisory and FGM Group, which aimed to raise awareness of health issues like breast and cervical screening amongst Black and Ethnic Minority women, and signposting and supporting victims of FGM. She chaired the Liverpool FGM Group for several years, and has addressed audiences, both nationally and locally, about this issue. She continued to be involved when the Group was merged with the Forced Marriage Group, and when a new Harmful Traditional Practices Group was set up.

She served on the Council of the Royal College of Midwives for seven years, and in 2000 co-founded the African Elders Association, which worked to reduce isolation and depression.

When her children began attending schools in Liverpool, Dorcas became involved in many school activities, serving for many years as a School Governor. After taking a degree in Clinical Management at the age of 55, she led a team at Liverpool Women's Hospital concerned with equality and diversity, and developed policies addressing bullying, harassment and racism. In 2015 she became an Advanced Practitioner after taking a Master's degree.

Among her awards, Dorcas was named the Liverpool Black Female Achiever of 2009; she received the Royal College of Midwives Life Time Achievement award; and was awarded the Order of the British Empire by H.M. The Queen in 2003.

In 2009, Dorcas's daughter sadly died from asthma, and in 2014 Dorcas and her husband set up the Breathe Easy Foundation in her memory. The Foundation supports patients with chronic asthma in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. As its Chair, Dorcas is responsible for strategic planning, training and fund-raising.

She served as a Shadow Governor for the Royal Liverpool and Broad Green Teaching Hospitals Trust for seven years, and is now a full Governor. Since 2010 she has been the Equality Advisor on Liverpool's Health and Local Council's Social Care Scrutiny Panel, and is a Trustee of Liverpool Community Voluntary Services. She is an active member of her local church.

Dorcas is currently Chair of the Merseyside Yoruba Community Association (her tribal organisation), and set up the Yoruba Descendants' Network in 2005, connecting Yorubas from the North-West and Midlands. She was given the Omoluwabi Award in recognition of outstanding commitment and leadership in community services for this pioneering initiative.

Joining Soroptimist International of Liverpool in 2013, she served as President in 2018. She was recently appointed S.I. South Lancashire Regional Vice-President.

