Racist bullying of BAME individuals rife at England’s NHS Acute Trusts

Racist bullying of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals is rife among NHS Acute Trusts in England, a new report reveals today. The NHS Equality and Diversity Council today published the inaugural report of the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES), showing results of the experiences of BME and white staff from the staff survey 2015 at every NHS trust across England. This is the first time the WRES data has been collected and published nationally.

The report looked at four indicators across acute trusts, ambulance trusts, community provider trusts, and mental health and learning disability trusts. The results show a picture of variation across the health service with some trusts making progress, whilst others still have a considerable way to go. One indicator looked at the percentage of staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from staff in the last 12 months.

- 75% of all acute trusts show a higher percentage of BME staff being harassed, bullied or abused by staff in comparison to White staff. 22% of acute trust returns (33 organisations) show a lower percentage of BME staff report being harassed, bullied or abused by staff. Five organisations report the same response rate, indicating no gap between BME and White experience.

- Whereas a much higher proportion of BME staff report harassment, bullying or abuse by staff in the last 12 months compared to White staff, the levels of harassment, bullying, or abuse from patients relatives or the public are similar for White and BME staff.
• In 86% of acute trusts, a higher percentage of BME staff do not believe that their organisation offers equal opportunities for career progression or promotion in comparison with White staff.

• Most acute trusts (81%) report a higher proportion of BME staff having personally experienced discrimination from a manager, team leader or colleague than White staff.

• In 2014 The Snowy White Peaks of the NHS found that BME staff were treated less favourably than White staff in recruitment, including to Boards, access to career development, disciplinary processes, were bullied more, and were victimised more seriously if they were whistle-blowers.

Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England, and co-chair of the NHS Equality and Diversity Council said: “This report provides unvarnished feedback to every hospital and trust across the NHS about the experiences of their BME staff. It confirms that while some employers have got it right, for many others these staff survey results are both deeply concerning and a clear call to action. As this is the first year of the WRES, it provides a transparent baseline from which each employer will now be seeking to improve.”

Joan Saddler, co-chair of the NHS Equality and Diversity Council and Associate Director at the NHS Confederation, said: “The report details findings from the initial WRES programme phase that exposes data trusts have traditionally collected but generally failed to act upon. The opportunity to improve care quality and staff motivation whilst supporting innovation is clearly signalled. Organisations that are serious about improvement for all, will begin planning to be ahead of the next programme phase of wider engagement and alignment of the WRES to a wide range of equality and inclusion approaches.”
NHS England investing £2m in the Workforce Race Equality Standard programme

NHS England is now investing £2m over two years (2015-17) in the WRES programme to identify and share best practice building on what Trusts are starting to do to improve recruitment, Board membership, disciplinary action and bullying of BME staff. This includes training and developing 75 champions based in trusts who will help reduce inequality, spread best practice and improve patient care.

Yvonne Coghill, OBE NHS England’s Director, Workforce Race Equality Standard Implementation, said: “This seminal report illustrates the difference in experience between BME and White staff in the NHS. We hope the content of the report will encourage organisations to acknowledge and accept the experiences of their BME staff and to work towards making our NHS a fairer more equitable organisation for all.”

Huge gap between rhetoric and reality

Stephen Dorrell, Chair, NHS Confederation said: “The objective of inclusive employment practice wins virtually unanimous endorsement across the health and care sector, but today’s report challenges us to recognise that the gap between rhetoric and reality remains uncomfortably large. I believe that all NHS organisations should ensure that they are genuinely “equal opportunity employers” and should adopt policies which ensure that all staff members receive the same positive opportunities.”

In addition to the WRES survey signposting the work needed to make the NHS a fair employer, NHS England is today also publishing details of new steps to help the NHS become a healthy employer.

The cost of sickness absence to the NHS stands at around £2.4bn – around £1 in £40 of the total budget, excluding the cost of staff cover as well as patient treatment. If sickness
absence was reduced by one day per person per year then the NHS would save around £150m, equivalent to around 6,000 full time staff.

Therefore trusts are being encouraged to improve staff health by unlocking their share of a £450m CQUIN using new guidance being published today.

Click here to download a copy of the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard Data Analytics Report

Click here to download a copy of the NHS Staff Health & Wellbeing CQUIN Guidance Report