

June 2020

Communication to staff

Dear all

Recent events in the US coupled with the disproportionate impact that Covid-19 has had on the BAME community has triggered protests and soul searching worldwide. There is a growing consciousness about institutional racism and longstanding inequalities that have belied improvement for generations.

Sadly, NHSBT is not immune from these problems.

Colleagues will remember that, in response to worrying reports about the working environment in Colindale, we commissioned an organisational diagnostic from an independent company - Globis Mediation. To hold ourselves to account, we also committed to publishing the findings.

The report makes for extremely difficult reading. It points out:

- unacceptable treatment of BAME colleagues;
- poor management practices; and
- a culture which does not reflect the values we expect in our organisation.

Some colleagues may question the report, feeling it doesn't represent their experience of working at NHSBT. That may be true – and what a privilege! But if we are to become a truly diverse and inclusive organisation, we must seek to listen to rather than deny other colleagues' lived experience, which could be vastly different than our own.

Whilst this report focuses on Colindale, we know that these issues aren't limited to this one site. Our Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) data provide quantitative evidence of bias, e.g. in recruitment and promotion. And an organisational consultant, who we recently engaged to help us re-imagine the donor experience and close the Ro supply/demand gap, shared with us their first-hand experience of encountering bias and micro aggressions from colleagues in different parts of the organisation.

Together, these show a side of the organisation that does not reflect our core values and, moreover, will not support our efforts to improve the diversity of our donor base which we all know is a strategic priority.

To anyone who feels they have suffered bias or discrimination at NHSBT – whether due to the colour of your skin or perhaps your gender, age, disability and/or sexual

orientation – we apologise for the hurt and pain you have suffered and for the failure of this organisation to tackle the underlying issues that have allowed this situation to go on for so many years. More importantly, we are committed to taking action.

We have already announced a number of immediate actions.

With the report now published, we will work closely with the BAME Taskforce at Colindale, as well as our wider staff networks, and union colleagues on a wider work plan of activity. This will include, but not be limited to, a review of our HR policies and processes, as well as a programme of leadership and organisational development to help all of us understand our individual and collective role in making NHSBT a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

Like other strategic priorities, we will be setting targets and holding ourselves to account for delivery.

We want to thank those of you who have spoken up about your experience of working at NHSBT. We know that doing so takes courage, as well as trust that your efforts will result in positive change.

That said, the burden of speaking up shouldn't fall to those of you who have been subjected to bias and unacceptable behaviour. Many of us have good intentions about diversity and inclusion. But saying we're not racist won't bring about change. Change requires all of us – and particularly leaders - to speak up and take action. We want to support you in feeling safe and knowing how to do this.

We hope that we will look back in a few years' time and see today as a turning point in our journey to make NHSBT a more diverse and inclusive organisation – where everyone can bring their whole self to work in our mission of saving and improving lives. That will, of course, only happen if we all commit to listening, learning and taking action.

Thank you for taking the time to read the report and for your support on this important strategic agenda. We welcome your feedback and reflections.

NHSBT Executive Team