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To: Chief Executives
Chairs
Human Resource Directors
Employee Directors

13/July/2020

Dear Colleagues

On 23 June John Connaghan, Interim Chief Executive of NHS Scotland wrote to you about the importance of improving the quality of minority ethnicity data for hospital activity returns to Public Health Scotland. His letter also highlighted the need to focus on listening to the voices of our minority ethnic staff to address any concerns they have had in relation to COVID-19; and moving forward, any anxieties, they may have in relation to remobilisation.

With this in mind, we have been engaging with Health Boards that already have minority ethnic staff networks and work with these networks directly. We also have the support of our Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) Programme Board, the Expert Race Reference Group and other key partners in driving this and wider work on race equality forward. The issues highlighted by the pandemic for minority ethnic communities and workers are wide ranging and complex including racial, health, social and economic inequalities. Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) have a key role to play here and we need to commit collectively to focus on our response to COVID-19, and also in the longer term.

From our early work, we are aware that only three Health Boards, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside, have minority ethnic staff networks. We are also aware that these networks extend to staff working in HSCPs. It goes without saying that we need to support the roll-out of these networks across the whole of the NHS in Scotland to give our minority ethnic staff across the service a forum and a voice. It has been encouraging to learn that many other Health Boards have already expressed an interest in establishing staff networks.

These new and existing networks also need to be empowered to engage with us at local and national level to develop communications, policies and guidance that support the people it is designed for, in a culturally informed and competent way. With this in mind a toolkit is being developed that includes terms of reference, a suggested action plan and resources to support minority ethnic staff networks. This will be available in the next couple of weeks.

We believe that local networks should be supported by a national network. The Equalities and Diversity Leads and the REAP Programme Board have offered to support the creation of a national network with a clear role and remit and governance structure which will focus on collaboration and a commitment to drive change. More details on this will follow.



We are now at a critical point and it is clear that we need to do things differently. We also have an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss to make change happen. More broadly, we need to build and nurture a more inclusive culture and need to attract, retain and progress talent from a diverse range of backgrounds. We work with and amongst diverse communities and I strongly believe our NHS will be better in every way, if our workforce is fully reflective of all our communities.

With this in mind, I am requesting some actions from you personally that signal your commitment to addressing any concerns minority ethnic staff have in respect of the pandemic and a clear statement on equalities, diversity and inclusion. Firstly, communicating with your staff that this matters to you and to them. Early involvement of colleagues from minorities in the crafting of this message and in hearing their lived experience will be vital. I am also requesting that you establish a network of champions, including at senior and executive team levels on race, disability and LBGTQ with the involvement of staff networks, trade unions and professional organisations. I would also like to have your commitment to clear governance and lines of accountability up to board level in this work, and in developing a process for understanding progress and impact within your Health Board on these matters.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update you on progress on the next cohort of the NHS Professional Careers Programme for disabled graduates; and to ask for your assistance for the final assessment stage. 76 candidates have been identified for final assessment, with a broad range of qualifications, knowledge and skills. The final assessment stage is carried out in partnership with Health Boards and interviews will take place over five days, from 4 August.

One NHS member is required per interview panel and there will be three panels per day with each panel interviewing five candidates. The interviews will be carried out on Microsoft Teams or other similar format and we are looking for a wide representation from Health Boards, across the country. With this in mind, could you please identify and send the names and contact details of panel members to Craig Worton by e-mail to: craig.worton@gov.scot by close of play on 24 July at the latest? An information session for panel members will be arranged shortly after that.

Finally, I would like to thank you all in advance for your support in taking this work forward. I would also be grateful if you could send details of your statement to staff and plans for champions and establishing local equality staff networks to Alison Carmichael, by e-mail to Alison.carmichael@gov.scot. Please also get in touch with Alison if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you.

Yours Sincerley



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