

<https://www.hsj.co.uk/workforce/exclusive-nhs-england-bme-staff-report-widespread-bullying/7021315.article>

Exclusive: NHS England BME staff report widespread bullying

By Shaun Lintern 20 December 2017

NHS England survey into BME staff experience reveals widespread experience of bullying, harassment and racial discrimination 55 per cent of BME staff say they were bullied by their line manager since starting work at NHS England. However, 53 per cent said they had a good or very good experience of working for NHS England

More than half of NHS England black and minority ethnic staff reported being personally bullied by their line manager in an internal survey, HSJ can reveal.

The “deep dive” survey of BME staff at the national commissioning body found 55 per cent of respondents had been bullied by a line manager since starting work at the organisation. It also revealed 36 per cent – or 58 out of 163 people – said they experienced bullying, harassment or abuse at work based on their race. 87 per cent (98 people) said their ethnic background was a factor in unfair decisions about their career progression.

One staff member said there was ‘obviously a lack of BME staff at the higher band jobs’

The survey, leaked to HSJ, asked staff a series of questions based on their experience since they joined the organisation.

It was carried out in February and March this year after NHS England’s main staff survey identified that BME staff were more likely to be discriminated against than their colleagues.

The report accompanying the survey said there was a “commitment that regions and directorates should work to reduce levels of bullying and harassment reported in each of their areas by 10 per cent by October 2017.” It is understood that target was not reached but that work is ongoing.

It also said NHS England would develop "Respect at Work Contacts, whose role will complement the work of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians to provide a place where staff can raise concerns" adding: "The aim is to launch this in September 2017." HSJ understands these new roles will be implemented during 2018.

Other key results from the BME staff survey include:

53 per cent said they had a good or very good experience of working for NHS England in response to a question on the causes of sickness absence "a large number" identified anxiety as a lead cause; and 6 per cent were subject to a disciplinary and 9 per cent had submitted a grievance.

One worker said in their survey response: "It doesn't appear that much is done to tackle the initial rumblings from staff who are experiencing bullying until something catastrophic happens."

Another said: "There is obviously a lack of BME staff at the higher band jobs. I honestly don't believe that is all down to suitability for the job. It seems a shame to me because there is a lot of talent out there."

Since joining NHS England, chief executive Simon Stevens has targeted improving the NHS's record on racial equality. He was instrumental in the creation of the workforce race equality standard for NHS organisations.

NHS England said the annual staff survey had shown staff from a BME background experiencing bullying or harassment in the last 12 months had fallen by 4 per cent, while experience of discrimination fell to 14 per cent.

Rafi Chaudry, co-chair of the NHS England BME staff network, said: "Making the NHS a fairer place to work is good for our staff and good for patients. One member of NHS England staff feeling they are treated unfairly because of their race or any other personal characteristic is one too many, and we regularly canvas all of our staff to tell us what we need to do better to make NHS England a fairer place to work.

"Our most recent data shows the number of NHS England workers facing discrimination or bullying has decreased. In both NHS England and across the wider NHS, although there is a long way to go, we are

making progress and the establishment of the BME network, supported by our directors and board, will mean this issue remains a top priority.”