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**workforce and training**

**14.12.17**

**NHS race equality improving, but ‘hard work still ahead’**

Race equality in the NHS workforce has improved over the past year, but officials agree that there is still a lot more to be done.

NHS England’s [**Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.england.nhs.uk%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F12%2Fworkforce-race-equality-standard-wres-data-report-2017.pdf&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=2ThUr0RfakFcF4mb7thvcwMGW7en6OfI3ihOpogmrf4%3D&reserved=0) shows that the number of senior staff within the health service from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background has continued to improve but is still short of full representation.

For example, although the number of very senior managers (VSMs) from BME backgrounds within the NHS has gone up by 18% from 2016 to 2017, this still only represents 7% of all VSMs – which is significantly lower than the total BME representation across the workforce (18%).

But there has been an overall positive movement shown by the report, with a steady increase in the number of trusts with more than one board member from a BME background and in the number of BME nurses overall – a pattern that has continued since 2014.

[**Simon Stevens**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FSearch%2Fsimon%2520stevens&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=V46OQuxxDbHBe3tTTrNDKBgjYlh2xfLhkIwIxtKnBlw%3D&reserved=0), NHS England’s chief executive, said the evidence presented by the WRES showed some positive signs yet was also a reminder of the work still to be done.

“Building a more representative workforce is good both for hard working NHS staff and for the diverse patients and communities we serve,” he explained. “As the largest employer in Britain and one of the biggest in the world, the NHS has a particular duty to be fair and supportive for all our employees.

“[The] assessment shows important improvements for our BME staff, [**but it’s also a clear reminder of the hard work still ahead**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FNews%2Fstevens-much-left-to-do-as-bme-staff-still-more-likely-to-be-bullied-at-work%2F167933&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=EoUqfmbMVwVzD4ozB4UD0kWF6ThYp4NiUAVuyDB%2BHcY%3D&reserved=0).”

Tom Sandford, the [**Royal College of Nursing’s**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FSearch%2Frcn&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=oAe0McHmM5HE5awGEmKwS2dsvibBi9BnoDrJBcyEK4c%3D&reserved=0) England director, said there was “[**no room for racism**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FNews%2Fsir-andrew-cash-we-are-in-the-foothills-of-tackling-nhs-race-equality%2F173504&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=O4yFYivY0DEPpUVAr6gO65dSyd%2FPiqsGvA14BAwM1ww%3D&reserved=0) across the health and care sector,” and that findings showed how much more work was left to be done.

“This report is further evidence of the damaging impact of discrimination on the careers of BME nurses and health care support workers. Across England they have less chance of being shortlisted, accessing career development training and are more likely to be formally disciplined than their white colleagues,” he continued.

“When there is racial inequality in the workplace it can affect patient care – it is now time for employers to take robust action to address this systemic problem across the sector.”

**Discrimination and disciplinary action**

There are still documented problems with discrimination and disciplinary action for people from BME backgrounds. While this is improving, the numbers are still relatively high.

BME members of staff are 1.37 times more likely to enter the formal disciplinary process than white staff, a decrease from the 1.56 figures of last year but still showing a disparity.

In addition, around 14% of these staff have experienced discrimination from colleagues or managers at work compared to 6% of white workers.

Responding to the figures, Marie Gabriel, chair of the WRES Strategic Advisory Group and East London NHS FT, commented: “I am encouraged by the findings of this report as it shows some changes taking place in the system.

“We are not where we would like to be on workforce race equality, but we have moved on from where we started. I am particularly pleased to see the increase in senior leaders and board representation across England, although this still represents a very small number.”

[**The WRES is an annual review**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FNews%2Fnhs-workforce-race-equality-standard-unveiled-%2F82276&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=neBUcNwT5vIZqcYPieMvkdjbMQU1oMBLUBykrWaKYo4%3D&reserved=0) aimed at supporting organisations to understand the importance of engaging with all members of staff, [**thus ensuring there is fair representation across all levels of the workforce.**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FComment%2Fthe-equality-equation-that-doesnt-add-up&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=N6Qk5qOd3tFdX%2BhdUhbJPMqUpXMo%2FUnzt2lh0epTMas%3D&reserved=0)

England’s chief nursing officer and senior responsible officer for WRES, [**Jane Cummings**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FSearch%2Fjane%2520cummings&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=PUXYtYU6lHZFPqGRnoFbHHHn7JLOgjFR74ONhZok4Yc%3D&reserved=0), said she was happy that the review was showing improvements for the second year in a row.

She added: “There is still a lot to be done to ensure we see more BME nursing and midwifery staff taking on more senior roles. For the first time, the London region has made some slight improvement, which I hope to see continue in the coming years.”

In the July/August edition of NHE, NHS England’s director of WRES implementation, Yvonne Coghill, [**wrote about the positive aspects**](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalhealthexecutive.com%2FHealth-Service-Focus%2Fcontinuing-to-shine-a-light-on-workforce-race-equality%2F177934&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce570e0872aea4728a9fb08d544741788%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C636490187760554092&sdata=BTKz0jLqzKhb7asScQKmZFN%2Bjd%2FSbRXT3fNvssqyfGA%3D&reserved=0) of the review and the tackling the difficult race equality agenda.

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