

Connecting diversity with leadership

Leadership and the potential impact it can have on organisational performance and patient experience is at the forefront of the agenda within the NHS. The NHS Next Stage Review emphasises the requirement of high-quality leadership at all levels within organisations. There is also growing evidence that senior leaders can play a crucial role in the design and success of service delivery and employment to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

This *Briefing* brings together evidence from within the NHS and externally to support trusts and their leaders to use their roles to embed diversity within their organisations and effectively respond to the current regulatory climate.

Key points

- Leadership should focus on diversity's strategic potential to contribute to the quality agenda.
- The greatest impact from diversity occurs when it is positioned as a core strategic boardroom issue.
- The regulatory and legislative requirements to embed equality and diversity within organisations require a proactive leadership approach.
- Leaders must be active diversity champions in order to ensure that they are inclusive.
- Dedicated time between leaders and diversity leads is crucial.

Background

The introduction of the Equality Bill and its emphasis on outcomes, transparency, accountability and enforcement, places considerable onus on leaders to mainstream equality and diversity and place it at the centre of everything they do. The Bill gives new powers to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to actively challenge organisations regarding their practice.

The introduction of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) registration process also signals an intention for the regulator to proactively address compliance issues regarding equality and diversity practices. The CQC has made it clear that it will listen to service users from all communities and will not hesitate to use its powers to conduct special reviews and studies. The Commission also intends to highlight important issues for key groups such as black and minority ethnic (BME) service users and others.

Both the Darzi report, *High quality care for all*, and the NHS Constitution encourage NHS trusts to build on their existing work around leadership to create an NHS which has quality of care as its organising principle in the delivery of services.

Part of the work of the NHS Next Stage Review leadership work stream is an inclusion strategy that focuses on increasing the number of clinicians, BME groups, women and diversity of talent in leadership positions. The Department of Health (DH) has set up the Diversity Council and the Leadership Council to support NHS organisations with the equality and diversity agenda.

Making equality and diversity the core business of your organisation is imperative to delivering quality while continuing to meet the needs of a changing and diverse population.

Diversity needs senior leaders

Despite the difficult economic climate, employers are seeing the creation of inclusive and diverse workplaces as a business imperative which will help them weather the recession. According to a new report, *Measuring progress: meeting challenges*,¹ 96 per cent of employers have a senior-level leader who champions the importance of equality and diversity within their organisation and 86 per cent of employers say that they are still putting the financial resources in place to help create more diverse workplaces.

Similarly, the Reframing study (2007)² looked at diversity and leadership within some of the largest and most progressive UK organisations and concluded that:

- organisations appeared to gain greatest impact from diversity when it is positioned as a core strategic boardroom issue
- diversity works when executives can see immediate business results and executives become active 'diversity leaders'
- organisations benefit most from diversity when it is proactively led by top executives and they work with their senior diversity professional adviser in an effective partnership.

The study was commissioned and sponsored by the Diversity

Professionals Forum and contributors included Alliance and Leicester, the British Council, Clifford Chance LLP, the Co-operative, Deutsche Bank, Herbert Smith LLP, HBOS, KPMG, Lloyds TSB, PricewaterhouseCoopers and the UK Film Council.

Supporting the leadership and national diversity agenda

Senior leaders within the NHS have decided to set up a number of bodies to support the wider equality agenda on a national basis.

Department of Health

Diversity Council: Its key role is reporting on equality and diversity issues to the NHS Management Board, including championing improvement and campaigning for change. The council will include lay members, representatives from patient groups, NHS staff, social care and voluntary organisations. In line with the commitments in Lord Darzi's review and the NHS Constitution, the council will provide clear leadership on equality and diversity issues at the highest level. The council will be a sub-committee of the NHS Management Board and will work alongside the National Leadership Council.

Department of Health

Leadership Council: The DH and the NHS Leadership Council have highlighted a national

commitment and a regional Strategic Health Authority (SHA) requirement to develop robust talent management and leadership plans to ensure leadership capability and capacity for the future. This commitment is signalled in *Inspiring leaders: leadership for quality* (2009). The Leadership Council will also address diversity through its inclusion theme. This will be championed by the chief executive of NHS Derby City Primary Care Trust (PCT), Mr Prem Singh, to ensure that the profile of NHS leaders increasingly reflects the communities that it serves.

NHS Employers Equality and Diversity Partners: The partners represent a mix of NHS organisations of different sizes and types across the UK. They play a key role in supporting their local trusts on equality and diversity by sharing good practice, learning and expertise, and work closely with NHS Employers to help shape the national equality agenda.

NHS good practice

NHS Employers has collated the following insights through workshops and discussions with senior leaders and equality and diversity practitioners from across the NHS. This included leaders from national representative networks, the NHS Employers Equality and Diversity Partners and eleven

Case Study: West Midlands Ambulance Service – promoting and developing leadership capacity around equality and diversity

The organisation developed a single equality scheme (SES), after undertaking a region-wide consultation with local communities. In the foreword, both the chair and chief executive of the trust outlined their personal commitment to the promotion and progression of equality, diversity and human rights. In addition, the action plan outlined the importance of building capacity within the leadership of the trust to ensure communities within the West Midlands have confidence in those that manage their ambulance service.

The trust recognised from the outset that the successful delivery of the equality and diversity agenda was dependent on leaders with the confidence and knowledge to work with partners inside and outside the organisation, and at the same time the ability to demonstrate leadership around the diversity agenda.

The chair, chief executive and HR director all hold national diversity roles and the chair is currently leading on developing a national charter around leadership and diversity to be piloted across ambulance services. All have set an example through actively pushing the equality and diversity agenda and ensuring that equality and human rights is core business for the trust on a local and national level.

For further information see www.nhsemployers.org/SharedLearning/Pages/Promotinganddevelopingleadershipcapacityaroundequalityanddiversity.aspx

exemplar trusts who were highlighted in the Health Commission's publication *Tackling the challenge: promoting race equality in the NHS in England*.³

Their feedback has helped to identify key themes for senior leaders to consider and a checklist with examples of

practical actions that can be taken to proactively embed diversity across organisations.

Key themes are outlined below.

Build a shared vision of diversity

Leaders and diversity leads should craft a shared vision of diversity to ensure that it is inclusive. Useful questions to ask

include: does our organisation have the inclusive mindset and behaviours to excel at providing a service to a diverse population and how can diversity add value to our core aims and objectives?

Recognise the need for good followers as they make great leaders

Diversity requires excellent leadership to take organisations forward. To realise their vision, leaders also need good followers who are confident in dealing with the equality and diversity agenda. Good followers need to be understanding, supportive and willing to help realise the leader's vision around equality

and diversity. This also ensures that an organisation maintains momentum by nurturing future talent and leaders.

One step at a time

Wherever an organisation is at in terms of equality and diversity, it is helpful to break down the journey into manageable steps to sustain momentum and plan progress. Agree a realistic plan with clear timelines and signpost key milestones for interim results. This will help to grab attention and create a sense of achievement when objectives are met.

Align diversity goals and organisational goals

Diversity becomes a fundamental

part of an organisation's culture when it is integrated into all areas (for example, performance management, recruitment and selection, succession processes and retention strategies).

Treat diversity as business as usual

Leaders should work towards creating an internal environment where the execution of diversity initiatives are recognised as 'business as usual'. This is increasingly important in light of the Equality Bill, which brings together diversity strands making it imperative for organisations to embed equality and diversity and see it as part of their core business.

Personal and collective responsibility

Each board executive should take a personal and a collective responsibility to work with others to ensure the organisation achieves its diversity goals and has appropriate accountability mechanisms. This could include setting their own personal objectives and ensuring this links to the board of governors.

Diversity diary walkabout exercise

Leaders need to interact with staff frequently, visiting their workplace and asking for frank input regarding the organisation's progress on diversity. When executives commit to regular visits to frontline staff and patient services it can create a shared insight into the organisation's diversity issues.

Case study: Newcastle PCT – embedding equality and diversity as an equality and diversity lead

Newcastle PCT has put in place strong leadership and governance for achieving equality and diversity. There is an experienced equality and diversity lead, and champions in each service area. An equality and diversity group, which includes trust staff and members of the community, reports to the quality and safety committee and the provider services board.

The trust has devolved leadership responsibility for diversity across the different directorates, each of which must demonstrate its accountability (such as providing evidence of progress towards achieving personal objectives and governance structure). The equality and diversity lead acts in an advisory capacity, with directors and their teams holding responsibility for equality and diversity.

For further information see www.nhsemployers.com/SharedLearning/Pages/EmbeddingequalityanddiversityasanEandDlead.aspx

Build dedicated time between leaders and diversity leads

It is vital that senior leaders and equality and diversity leads hold a shared vision for equality and diversity that supports the organisation's business objectives. Relationships between diversity leads and senior leaders are most effective when they are based on partnership and transparency, and dedicated time is set aside to develop them.

Check the composition of the equality steering group or committee

The composition of an equality and diversity committee should be diverse. Senior members of the frontline functions must be full participating strategic partners. In addition, the chair of the committee should be someone in a senior leadership decision-making position.

A leadership diversity checklist

The following checklist has been developed to support leaders collectively and individually to provide the appropriate leadership on equality and diversity. Leaders and boards should be encouraged to answer the following key questions.

How is my organisation performing around managing diversity?

- Undertake or initiate a self assessment of performance and diversity using a recognised tool such as the

Employer Forum on Disability (EDF) framework, Stonewall Workplace Index or NHS Employers' online equality and diversity audit tool.

Where must we improve our management of diversity?

- Use what you have learnt to set a goal for action which should be ambitious, measurable and integrated into the business planning process.
- Sit down with the organisation's diversity lead and decide which interventions that are outcome-focused can make a major impact.
- Provide demonstrable support.

How do I know we are improving on managing diversity?

- Have regular meetings with the diversity lead.
- Ensure the board receives a set of equality and diversity performance measures as part of the board performance scorecard. This should include measures such as knowing your communities, equality mapping, community engagement and satisfaction, having responsive services and patient care and a modern, diverse workforce.

How can I show clear personal commitment to mainstreaming and improving performance around managing diversity?

- Make regular public statements around commitment to diversity, backed up with action.
- Ensure equality and diversity issues are addressed and represented on all board and management team agendas.
- Provide support to diversity lead(s) and managers.
- Go and meet diverse staff and patients.

What skills and capacity do we need to build to make this happen?

- Ensure you remain up to date with the latest thinking around diversity management.
- Ensure staff have access to appropriate resources and training.

How will we know how successful we have been?

- Review performance in line with key performance indicators looking specifically at equality and diversity and other benchmarking exercises to determine the degree of success.

NHS Employers viewpoint

Diversity needs to be supported at the top and embraced throughout the organisation. Senior leaders must be active diversity champions. Diversity is not about political correctness

but about integrating health equality, talent management, marketing and changing demographics into the agenda of leaders and, crucially, business planning.

For more information see the NHS Employers briefing *Managing diversity: making it core business* –

www.nhsemployers.org/publications

The Equality Bill requires a proactive approach to equality and diversity and brings with it the challenge of actively demonstrating it in practice. This has implications for

senior leaders who must drive the agenda forward in their organisations to ensure it is integrated into their business practices.

The creation of the NHS Equality and Diversity Council is an important step forward. This affords key leaders from within and outside the NHS the opportunity to champion and challenge the NHS to fulfil the shared vision of high-quality care for all. Its work will also be critical to the innovation agenda, both in terms of workforce and the services the NHS delivers.

The establishment of the council provides a clear leadership signal about the importance of equality and diversity issues. The challenge to leaders at all levels now is to ensure that their organisations have a coherent focus on the quality of, and access to, healthcare and employment opportunities that benefits all staff, potential staff, patients, services users and communities.

For more information on these and other equality and diversity case studies visit the shared learning area at **www.nhsemployers.org**

Case study: Liverpool PCT – embedding diversity and leadership through commissioning

Liverpool Community Health saw the separation of the commissioning and provider arms as a good opportunity to review and embed equality and diversity in the organisation.

The new organisation realised that the successful delivery of services relied on clarity about who is responsible and accountable for equality and diversity. It aimed to demonstrate to the commissioner the PCT's good understanding of local communities as part of the tendering process and to ensure that the provider service integrated equality and diversity into its vision of wanting to be the number one 'unique service provider' for Liverpool.

This involved developing and working with commissioners and managers on valuing equality and diversity as a key part of winning business via the commissioning process. The organisation up-skilled managers, providing training and management development opportunities around equality and diversity, to aid this process.

For further information see

www.nhsemployers.org/SharedLearning/Pages/Embeddingdiversitythroughleadership.aspx

References

1. Opportunity Now (2009), *Measuring progress: meeting challenges*.
2. Diversity Professionals' Forum (2007), *Reframing diversity*, www.diversityprofessionals.org.uk
3. Healthcare Commission (2009) *Tackling the challenge: promoting race equality in the NHS in England*, page 34.

NHS Employers

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NHS Employers represents trusts in England on workforce issues and helps employers to ensure the NHS is a place where people want to work. The NHS workforce is at the heart of quality patient care and we believe that employers must drive the workforce agenda. We work with employers to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

NHS Employers is part of the NHS Confederation.

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