

Race equality – time for real change

NHS Provider's (NHSP) four-year strategy made race equality a key priority. We have embarked on two closely related workstreams as a result. Our first was based on a recognition that we could only credibly work on this agenda if we looked at ourselves and held the mirror up to reflect on where we are as an organisation. The second was to engage with members to understand their own self-assessments of where they are in proactively tackling race inequality and what NHSP could do to accelerate the pace of change.

Our report, Race 2.0 – Time for real change highlights just 4% of trust leaders think race equality is fully embedded as a core part of their board's business. Given the data still paints a stark picture of the ongoing racial injustice faced by staff, patients and service users, how can we make this a time of real change which reflects the urgency of this challenge?

Key requirements for real change

Hearts and minds change

- Creating more safe spaces and committing to have the difficult conversations drawing on data and personal testimony. Promoting the concept of self as an instrument for change and proactively challenging structural racism.

Confidence and capability to act

- Evidence on high-impact interventions and why they have worked in a particular context. Peer learning sessions on 'the how', with a relentless focus on outcomes. Signposting to wider resources, other support offers and networks.

Taking accountability

- Embedding race equality into the heart of the board's business, looking at how progress is evaluated and reported, and key questions to ask.

Our activities

We are proposing a range of events and resources to support each of these three requirements for real change. We will challenge mindsets and encourage personal accountability, with a strong focus on leading by example and white allyship.

This will include a blog series on personal journeys based on the testimonies of white leaders, podcasts and talking head videos, drawing on NHS Providers' own journey of hearts and minds change. Intimate roundtables will explore questions and solutions for boards, including peer learning and learning from other sectors on how these have been answered. We will create evidence-based case studies and webinars. We will mainstream a focus on tackling race inequality throughout our existing programmes including governor support, events and networks and our national influencing. Finally, we will prioritise collaborative working and signposting to other offers such as The Leadership Academy's whole-board development sessions to help members access other sources of support.

Questions for governors

Governors can use their statutory duty to hold Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the board by enquiring about their organisation's overarching plans to tackle the key requirements for real change described above. They can also use their duty to represent the interests of members and the public to feedback views to their board on this subject. Some example questions are provided below:

- How are NEDs assured that the board is doing everything it can to position race equality as a priority?
- Are NEDs striving to deepen their own levels of awareness and understanding of the impact of structural racism on staff, patients and services users and their local communities more widely, and are they assured that other board members are doing the same?
- Is the board aware of the three targets identified by the organisational Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) data as the prime focus for action?
- What evidence have NEDs looked at to assure themselves that the board is developing a compelling strategy which extends beyond the WRES indicators?
- Are you confident that staff, patients and service users and the community you serve are being brought on the journey? How are NEDs assured that there are regular opportunities for all

employees to engage in honest conversations about race to ensure they are seeing the organisation as it really is?

- How does the board seek assurance that progress is being made? What are the sources of assurance and are NEDs assured of their quality? What race outcome measures and metrics do the board see and how often are they reviewed?

We welcome feedback as we continue to finalise and develop our programme for the coming year via governors@nhsproviders.org

References: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/equality-standard/>

NHS Providers products: <https://nhsproviders.org/programmes/race-equality>