



BARRIERS TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC NHS SUPPORT WORKERS

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Executive Summary

The Problem

Since 2002 NHS North-West has provided support workers with the opportunity to undertake assistant practitioner training subject to available posts and success in the selection procedures. Although 25-30% of support workers identify as BME, their representation on the Trainee Assistant Practitioner programme is less than 2%. Lack of access to progression opportunities has an impact on staff well-being and productivity which in turn affects care delivery.

Project Aims

To explore the factors that impact on access to the Assistant Practitioner Training programme by BME healthcare support workers from a Foundation Trust in the North West of England.

Project Objectives

- To survey both white and BME support worker staff to investigate their knowledge and experiences of the Assistant Practitioner training programme in a North-West Foundation Trust Hospital,
- To conduct focus groups with BME support workers to explore in depth the key issues and barriers to access to the Assistant Practitioner training, and
- To develop recommendations for maximising access to training and development opportunities of BME support staff working in the NHS

Methodology

Mixed methods were used. A survey of support worker staff within an inner city hospital Trust provided quantitative data which was analysed with Microsoft Excel™ using simple cross tabulations. Qualitative data was obtained from focus groups of BME support workers and analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings

The five key themes that emerged were:

- **Lack of Information about Opportunities.**

This included information not being provided in a timely manner, as well as information and advertisements being hard to locate.

- **Lack of Transparency about Recruitment.**

This included the selection of identified staff for training or development with no transparent selection criteria and BME staff being overlooked when opportunities arose.

- **Race and Discrimination**

The lack of formalised processes for recruitment to the Assistant Practitioner programme means that from the perspective of BME support workers it appears discriminatory.

- **Fear of Getting into Trouble.**

There were anxieties about challenging the status quo because of fears about disciplinary action.

- **A Need for Role Models**

Participants in the study held that there was a need for role models who reflect the full diversity of the workforce

Recommendations

The funding for the training of Assistant Practitioners or other education and training must be contingent on evidence of robust actions to ensure equal opportunity in the recruitment and selection of trainees.

Health Education North-West should develop guidance on the equal opportunity processes that must be in place

NHS organisations need to provide a specific regular forum for updates on training and other developmental or progression opportunities for unqualified staff

Outside bodies who are involved in training or education should be invited to the forum when appropriate to meet with potential candidates, offer advice and field questions

Allied to the forum, it is recommended that there are sessions specifically for addressing the concerns of BME staff

The NHS organisations should undertake an internal survey of BME staff to ascertain beneficial interventions by the Trust or Higher Education Institutions to enhance their prospects within the NHS.

HEIs must work with NHS organisations in the recruitment of trainees to ensure robust equal opportunity strategies are in place.

HEIs should provide some additional support for applications for staff from marginalised communities including BME staff.

Key conclusions

Support workers from BME backgrounds are as keen to develop as their white colleagues but are hindered by barriers to progression. In the interests of equality, staff well-being and care delivery, opportunities must be open to all. NHS Trusts, Higher Education Institutions and Health Education North West need to collaborate to ensure that there is open advertisement and dissemination of information about training and development; that equal opportunity processes are in place for recruitment, and selection and additional support is offered to BME staff.

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