



NED RECRUITMENT PHASE 2

Submitted by:

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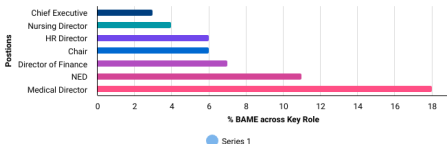
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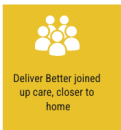
NED Recruitment Phase 2

Introduction

This project explores how Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (LSCFT) can better recruit, support and develop Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) NEDs, in order to address the under-representation of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in NED roles.



When it comes to health inequalities across Lancashire and South Cumbria, the ICS recognises there is a clear case for change across a range of areas and a need for us to work together to tackle these. These include the need to :



Part of that strategy to addressing health inequalities within our population, is us all being diverse employers and increasing the percentage of our workforce from black and ethnic minorities to be representative of our diverse communities.

The current work schedule is built upon the ongoing efforts of Phase 1, which is a comprehensive NED development program designed for colleagues within the BAME community. This program aimed to enhance the skills and capabilities of individuals interested in securing NED positions within Lancashire and South Cumbria provider Trusts. It has been recognised that the recruitment practices for board positions need to be reevaluated to ensure representations from the BAME community.

It has been acknowledged that we need to look at our current recruitment practices when recruiting to Board positions so that we can make it a reality that aspirant colleagues that have invested their time, commitment and engaged wholeheartedly in these development programmes have the opportunity to be successful in securing NED positions within Lancashire and South Cumbria provider Trusts.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) recommends that the accountability for diversity on board, must be led by the board. It recommends that the hiring process follows standard procedures and is proactive in seeking out different sources of suitable candidates and uses a range of recruitment and attraction methods to reach the widest pool of candidates.

AIM

To produce research into L&SC provider board's composition in respect of diversity and each organisation's recruitment practices of non-executives and learning from elsewhere on appointing diverse boards.
To produce a guide or toolkit that reflects upon the EHRC recommendations and other best practice that will guide our organisations to make changes in how we recruit and select Chair and Non-Executive Board members across within our organisations to enable more inclusive and diverse boards that represent the local communities our provider Trusts serve.

Programme of works:

1. Conduct an audit of current system recruitment processes and practices drawing upon both quantitative and qualitative information to understand how Chairs and non-executives are appointed (including search approaches, tools, standards, methodologies & decision making) and identify any organisational obstacles or barriers to appointing diverse leaders.
2. Utilise established networks to explore experiences and perceptions held amongst suitable candidates from black minority ethnic communities within Lancashire & South Cumbria, to understand from the candidate's perspective any organisational barriers or obstacles to attaining and securing a board-level role within the organisations.
3. Identify case studies and examples of best practices within and outside of the sector that have had a positive impact.
4. Produce a best practice guide for recruiting to Chair and NED roles to strengthen diversity.
5. Produce a best practice user-friendly guide, which responds to and addresses any gaps, and necessary changes in practice highlighted within the audit and exploration of best practices, to use and implement in transforming recruitment practices.

Outcomes & Measures:

- A practice guide and standard are being worked towards across L&SC provider organisations that are proactive in seeking out different sources of suitable candidates and use a range of recruitment methods to reach the widest pool.
- Strengthened ethnic diversity amongst our boards.

METHODOLOGY

This piece of work was commissioned and funded by LSCFT. LBN was originally approached to provide support for the NED development program phase. This was then later changed to Phase 2 which was to look at existing recruitment processes.

Leaders drawn from a wider cross-section of society with unique lived experiences of diversity and subsequently different perspectives may provide a more nuanced understanding of diverse service users. A diverse group of leaders can make better decisions. The risk of groupthink – the practice of thinking or making decisions as a group, resulting typically in unchallenged, poor-quality decision-making – and similar discourse among homogeneous leadership, and our inability to consider a range of perspectives with regards to decision-making was frequently highlighted as a consequence of a homogeneous leadership.

LBN has reviewed the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the NED recruitment program and, specifically, its recruitment practices when developing NED roles.

In addition, best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of the program were identified, which can be used when designing future recruitment programs/cycles in the future.

A mixed methodology was employed for this evaluation which comprised of the following tools:

- (a) a desk study to gather information about existing recruitment and its methods -gathering details of applicants' past and present and engagement
- (b) Questionnaires with structured questions developed and shared
- (c) semi-structured interviews with current NEDS and those that have applied recently to ascertain their experiences.

FINDINGS

There is a significant under-representation of 'BAME' on NED roles, which in turn is not reflective of the communities LSCFT serves.

Phase 1 of the program which was initially developed to recruit and provide support to potential applicants as part of a NED development program has proved to be useful. However, we still remain to see whether this will lead to an increase in the uptake of BAME held NED roles in the long run. However, through a method of targeted, active recruitment via 'BAME' Networks, we can report that the uptake of those applying and identifying as BAME was very high during the phase and therefore deemed a success.

Phase 2: Further investigations have revealed findings that are detrimental to the representation of BAME in NED roles. More recently Hunter Healthcare published a report which reported disturbing experiences and figures of experiences of discrimination of BAME NEDs. When interviewing some current and previous NEDS their experiences were concurrent with these findings:

1. The findings are in line with the most recent article published in the Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/jul/20/25-of-bame-non-executive-directors-in-nhs-have-seen-discrimination-at-work>

57% of interviewed candidates cited that the use of executive search firms for recruitment of NEDs was challenging as they are dissociated from the trusts and the representation of the community that it serves.

75% of those interviewed reported that the application process was overly prescriptive, and the process was complicated and time-consuming.

65% of the group stated that they would be interested in receiving support in the form of a Q&A open event online or face-to-face before applying.

72% of those interviewed felt that there is a lack of transparency in the recruitment process especially when providing feedback to unsuccessful applications this in turn has deterred them from reapplying.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consider including external independent experts on your selection panel to ensure it is balanced and provides for different perspectives.
- Keep a paper trail explaining how each decision was reached to help demonstrate what objective and lawful steps have been taken to meet any diversity targets and to deal with any potential challenge from unsuccessful candidates
- LSCFT should consider using positive action, including proportionate steps to encourage candidates from groups under-represented on the board to apply, to maximise the opportunity to meet these targets.
- Create networks for BAME professionals who aspire to non-executive board positions and using these to identify potential candidates for specific board roles.
- LSCFT to provide development opportunities for under-represented groups to help them build and demonstrate attributes companies look for in board candidates.
- Through targeted recruitment for potential candidates from varied sectors / professions, such as law or accountancy, or the public, not for-profit or academic sectors.
- Specify in adverts that candidates from under-represented groups are encouraged to apply.
- Avoid relying only on personal networks and word-of-mouth recruitment as this significantly restricts the pool of applicants and risks ruling out good candidates with diverse skills and experience.
- If the LSCFT has to use an external recruitment firm that they should actively target representation of the community and consider protected characteristics.
- Name-blind applications. We recommend the names of applicants to remain anonymous until they have been invited to formal assessment. This could initially be piloted. There is a strong argument for implementing this given that names are no indication of competency and it offers, an immediate opportunity to reduce unconscious bias via a relatively straightforward approach.
- Existing NEDs to mentoring potential applicants that pass initial triage to provide insight and support for final applications.
- Timely and Constructive Feedback: Provide timely and constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates, enabling them to understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This will contribute to their professional development and enhance the overall candidate experience.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1:

AA a solicitor based in Lancashire applied to become a NED after a friend shared the recruitment post. The recruitment post looked like an attractive offer. AA states that the process was extremely time-consuming and technical, as AA had not applied for a 'posting' for many years. The complex language and technical guidelines and expectations made it difficult for AA to understand the specific skills and experience required for the role. He asked a friend to assist who is an NED at another trust and he felt that he had submitted a very strong application and at the very least was expecting an interview. Despite this, he managed to submit an application to AA stated:

'This narrow approach to recruitment not only limits the range of perspectives and ideas but also undermines the principle of inclusivity and equal opportunity'.

AA felt that the recruitment process left him confused as he was never offered feedback and that the recruitment process was far too rigid.

Case Study 2:

X applied for a NED role and was successful. X was in the role for 4 years but had no or little training on how to engage at that level. X said there were many occasions when she didn't understand terminology and there was an expectation that she would be fully versed in clinical terminology and NHS ways of working. X was expected to read and understand high-level reports and then contribute to meetings, again with little or no support. There was no training or supervision and X started to feel anxious when she was attending meetings. X was chairing some high level meetings and again there was little support. X felt that NHS professionals were underwhelmed by her input and did not value her experience and skills. X states there was a time when the board was discussing how better to engage with BAME communities. X offered her support but this offer was never taken up. The board had a change in Chief Exec and X states that the Chief Exec met with all board members but not her. When X resigned from the post, she told the Chair that she felt like she was just a tick box and her experience was neither used nor valued. X also told the Chair that she was disappointed that the new Chief Exec had not met with her. X was told that the Chief Exec was an introvert and found conversations difficult. X challenged this comment as the Chief Exec had met with all other board members. X felt completely disheartened by the system and those in it. X resigned after 4 years in the role.



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