



Viewpoint: LGBT are you in or out?

Ahead of the London Pride March, Richard Watson, Analytical Manager for the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) looks at inclusivity in the NHS and wider community.

Working on the NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard is a great privilege, as Analytical Manager for the programme I crunch the numbers daily and shine the light on inequalities for our black and minority ethnic (BME) colleagues and wider workforce. These figures help to inform the work of Yvonne Coghill, our Director of WRES Implementation.

As a white gay man working on a race agenda it gives me a unique insight into some of the challenges and opportunities BME and LGBT people face, which come to mind as we celebrate Pride month.

The NHS has one of the world's most diverse workforces employing over 1.4 million people, with 1.2 million of those working in hospitals and CCG's. According to data from NHS Digital around 1.9 percent (23,172) of those people are lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). When we look in more detail across professions, we see that nearly half of LGB people (48.9 percent) work in nursing, midwifery, health visitor or nursing support roles. However, we know these LGB figures are under reported and a truer reflection of the LGB workforce is closer to 3.3 percent bringing the estimated headcount to over 40,000, as reported in the NHS Staff Survey where respondents confidentially self-declare as LGB.

The NHS supports and celebrates its lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people in many ways such as participating in Pride events in local cities and towns, continued membership with Stonewall and having many effective LGBT staff networks making a real difference in driving improvements.

Celebrating Pride month is important to everyone in society as it educates people about the history of LGBT people and is an opportunity for us all to come together and celebrate difference and unity.

June 2019 Pride month has been tumultuous and one to remember. In the news recently we have seen articles on protests from religious groups on the teachings of LGBT relationships in British schools, homophobic attacks on London buses and an American group creating a 'straight pride' event to push back against equality.

Reports of homophobic hate crimes have risen steadily in London over the last four years, according to the Metropolitan Police crime statistics website, with 2,308 reported in 2018, up from 1,488 in 2014. The police have attributed the increase, in part, to a greater willingness of people to report anti-gay crimes.

This is all stark reminder of why we celebrate LGBT Pride and continue to support staff on this important agenda! But we need to come together to do this, rather than in pockets of small homogenous groups.

LGBT people can have one or multiple protected characteristics such as black, white, male, female, disabled, married and so on. The name given to these multi-faceted characteristics was created by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw and is known as intersectionality.

Over half (51%) of BME LGBT people face exclusion from the wider LGBT community as shown in a recent Stonewall report. BME LGBT even celebrate a separate Black Pride the day after London Pride. We even have two LGBT flags. The rainbow flag with the standard rainbow colours and another with black and brown stripes added to show support of people of colour.

So, even though you are in the group, you can also be out of the group.

A recent article highlights Manchester Pride is leading the way to be more inclusive of their BME community and has even created a new flag which incorporates all the rainbow flag colours, including black and brown.

Most NHS organisations now fly the rainbow flag for Pride month, but I hope to see an adoption of the one which includes our BME people. The NHS is doing some fantastic work for our LGBT and BME people, but we need to get better at doing this together in the spirit of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success - Edward Everett Hale.