

Ethnic diversity in paramedic education

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We are working across the east midlands to promote ethnic diversity in paramedic education and the profession. Research suggests having a workforce that represents the communities we serve reduces health inequalities.

We have started to collate national data to establish the current picture of prospective learners who may want to train to become a paramedic, and current paramedics in the workforce.

National data received from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) suggests (HESA, 2013/14 student records) that of all learners studying on paramedic programmes at higher education institutes (HEIs), 3.4% are from a Black or Minority Ethnicity (BME) background (ii).

The National Ambulance Diversity Forum has also conducted some initial research; these findings show as of September 2014, 7.4% of BME Paramedics were employed nationally (iii). It is worth noting that the data revealed high numbers of 'unknowns', and it is suggested that a data cleansing exercise would be required to ensure there is an accurate picture of the workforce.

The Office for National Statistics highlights that the BME population are growing nationally and as of 2011 the percentage of UK population identified as BME is 14% (iv). The percentages from HESA and ambulance trusts highlight there is work to be done to address the shortfall of BME groups within paramedic education and the profession.

Following the publication of the Paramedic Evidence Based Education Project (PEEP) Report (2013) and the Keogh Urgent Care review, Health Education has taken a lead responsibility across the East Midlands in identifying the current issues and challenges that the paramedic profession faces, and are leading the work nationally to address some of the key challenges.

This national work has provided the opportunity to implement some detailed research in the area of BME participation on paramedic programmes and ascertain the current BME profile amongst the current workforce.

As part of the national work, one of the key areas is to establish how the equality and diversity agenda is linking to wider workforce transformation. Areas of work such as the pre-degree pilot, and completing the transition plan, will highlight the requirement to produce an equality impact assessment, which will help to

identify future actions aligned to this agenda.

In response to this work stream, Health Education England across the midlands and east region arranged an 'ignition' event to initiate discussion about ethnic diversity and under representation in paramedic education. The objective of this event was to learn more about the current work and research that is taking place by Equality Challenge Unit in East Midlands, research conducted by Worcester University in the West Midlands and its policy implications, as well as providing evidence to feed into recommendations nationally.

The event was designed to appeal to a wide audience of representatives from HEIs, ambulance trusts and practitioners. The event was targeted at the Midlands and East geography; stakeholders also attended from across the country, to advocate that this work needs to take place nationally.

Key recommendations from the event were:

1. Need to adopt a national approach to increasing BME representation.
2. Action plan would need to be developed endorsed by HEE.
3. What role the Ambulance Diversity Forum could play to ensure ambulance trusts are moving this agenda forward.
4. Appropriately resource and source service users to contribute to this agenda.
5. Encourage and design the use of positive action strategies to engage BME groups.
6. Ensure information, advice and guidance delivered to school leavers includes role models from the paramedic profession.
7. Identify the role of the Leadership Academy in this area of work.
8. Work with wider stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus to establish the role they can play with this agenda.
9. Ensure there is appropriate support for prospective BME professionals to enter the profession, for example providing a uniform that is appropriate for particular cultures.
10. Develop a network of professionals nationally who have a vested interest in this area of work and enable sharing practice and resources.

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Source URL (modified on 08/02/2018 - 13:07): <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/paramedics/ethnic-diversity-paramedic-education>

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