

Dear Secretary of State,

Date

20.10.2023

Our members share your commitment to ensuring that the money given to them by the taxpayer is spent wisely and with impact.

They carefully weigh up decisions they make and evidence shows that the NHS in England is actually under-managed and spends less on management overheads and posts than comparable systems around the world, and indeed the wider economy (as this [analysis](#) for the NHS Confederation demonstrates). In addition, Integrated Care Boards will reduce their running costs by a significant percentage this year and our national regulator, NHS England, is also delivering similar cost reductions following its mergers with Health Education England and NHS Digital.

For the attention of

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
mb-sofs@dhsc.gov.uk

In that context your intervention yesterday on the money that may be spent on roles advising NHS organisations on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) will be of concern to ICB and other NHS leaders.

NHS leaders know that EDI is a key strategic function that contributes to increased productivity, efficiency, patient safety and quality improvement. The Government commissioned review of NHS leadership and management, undertaken by General Sir Gordon Messenger, also made clear that dedicated EDI professionals were necessary to help in this endeavour. In its 75th year, it is therefore clear to NHS leaders that the service will simply not survive without a continued and reinvigorated focus on ensuring EDI is at the core of everything it does.

However, it appears that the NHS has not collectively done enough to explain the reasons why most NHS organisations (in common with large staff intensive, public facing, organisations across the economy as a whole) invest in roles which provide advice on EDI to improve staff experience and retention, as well as patient care. Such roles are also part of the policy efforts led by your colleague, the Secretary of State for Trade, in her role as Minister for Women and Equalities.

We offer some examples of challenges facing NHS workplaces and patients, where our members believe that a specialist focus on EDI is required:

- The NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard shows that people of colour working in the NHS have a poorer experience than their white counterparts. This experience of racism by 22% of our workforce is slowly improving, but there is still work to do in every organisation in the NHS.
- We are beginning to recognise the long-standing misogyny and harassment that women have faced in many NHS workplaces and teams. Experience in the ambulance service across the UK has shown the importance of action on this issue.
- It is also recognised that many groups defined as having 'protected characteristics' in law can suffer poorer experiences, often have disproportionately worse health outcomes, and need specific support in accessing care. Organisations report that they benefit from colleagues in their teams who engage with these communities and ensure that organisations respond to their particular needs and concerns.

These are just three of many possible examples of where specialist EDI roles make a contribution to supporting and retaining staff and improving care to patients.

The NHS Confederation and our ICS Network would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you. If this is of interest, we would be grateful if your office could contact us via externalaffairs@nhsconfed.org to arrange a time.

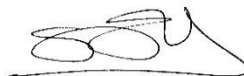
Yours sincerely,



Matthew Taylor
Chief Executive
NHS Confederation



Danny Mortimer
Chief Executive
NHS Employers



Sarah Walter
Director, ICS Network
NHS Confederation

Cc: The Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP, Minister for Women and Equalities
Sir Chris Wormald KCB, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Care
Professor Sir Stephen Powis, National Medical Director, NHS England
Dr Navina Evans, Chief Workforce Officer, NHS England
Dame Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer, NHS England
Steve Russell, Chief Delivery Officer, NHS England