

Guidance for Managers

Introduction

As a Trust, we value and appreciate all our staff and have zero tolerance to racism towards our colleagues or patients. Therefore, we will not tolerate, under any circumstances any of our staff being subjected to intimidation, harassment, or racist abuse.

The recent events fuelled with violence and destruction with some appalling behaviours highlight the importance of kindness and support in our Trust. We need to support and protect each other and be allies for those who may be feeling particularly anxious or concerned about the recent and ongoing troubling events.

In our hospitals and across our community services, we value the contribution that all our colleagues make towards caring for as well as supporting patients and population. The diversity of our staff is our strength, and your dedication and compassion are the backbone of our organisation.

Thank you for playing your part in making a positive difference to everyone who uses our services, as well as each other, and showing how proud you are to be part of a welcoming and inclusive Trust.

Purpose

This guidance is intended for use by managers across the Trust to enable and empower them to impact assess and provide support for staff who are impacted by local and national societal unrest and acts of violence from extremists and terrorists.

All managers are asked to:

1. Communicate the messages to staff that the Trust has zero tolerance for violence and aggression, racism, Islamophobia, and discrimination of any other form towards our people.
2. Hold individual conversations with all staff, paying particular attention to cultural sensitivities and to anyone who is concerned or impacted by scenes of unrest, rioting and violence, both to them personally and in their job roles.
3. To provide as much support as is possible to keep colleagues and their families safe and well.
4. Take a very strong anti-discrimination stance, reinforcing zero tolerance.
5. Avoid making assumptions and ensure that everyone in your team knows how to access support if they need it. Anyone from our diverse workforce may be negatively impacted by the current situation; be it themselves, family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

The following sections provide guidance on how to hold safety and wellbeing conversations with your team/individuals, key considerations, key expectations, and avenues of support.

1.) **Communication:**

All staff irrespective of whether they manage anyone or not can play an active role in actively opposing extremist activity and not tolerating violence, aggression, racism, Islamophobia, and discrimination of any kind.

All managers should actively take steps to circulate the below messages to staff, either via team meetings and huddles or ensuring that staff have seen the communication via normal wellbeing conversations and supervisions.

Important message from Richard Beeken, Chief Executive

5th August 2024

Dear colleagues

Very rarely do I write out to all staff via email, as this is a form of communication which can be overused. Instead, I tend to wait until Fridays and send out my thoughts and reflections on particular issues in the form of my weekly blog, "The Friday Message". This week, however, I feel compelled to write about a hugely upsetting and important subject and do so before Friday comes. That subject is the violence, racism and thuggery being witnessed on the streets of many towns in England and Northern Ireland and the impact it will be having on colleagues of colour.

Please see link below to a well-crafted message from the Chief Executive of NHS England, Amanada Pritchard, about this subject. Amanda's message sums up very well indeed, how I feel about this and expresses support to all non-white colleagues, be they British or from other countries. I encourage all colleagues to read it – it is a message for you, our NHS staff:

[Healthcare leaders update](#)

Any reasonable citizen of our country will be revulsed and deeply upset by what we have witnessed in recent days. There will be many colleagues who, by virtue of their faith or the colour of their skin, will feel anxious and alarmed at this moment in time in their own community, or in the care setting that they work. For those colleagues I would like to express my thanks and admiration to you for the work you do – it underpins #OurNHS and the NHS could not survive without your dedication, service, and strong values. I would also like to express that I stand with you in the seemingly never-ending process of making our own NHS, for all its imperfections, an example of what multi-cultural tolerance and diversity of thought and life experience, can be to the rest of the country. In our Trust, we embody the ambition, respect and compassion we must seek in wider society.

Statement from Amanda Pritchard, NHS Chief Executive - 5 August 2024

I had intended this message to focus mainly on thanking the many NHS colleagues who were involved in caring for those killed and injured in the horrendous attack in Southport last week – the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) crews who attended the scene, the receiving teams at Southport and Formby, Ormskirk, Alder Hey, Aintree, and Manchester Children's Hospitals, as well as the many other colleagues in those trusts, Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board and the North West region who helped coordinate the response.

The suffering of the people of Southport, and others touched by the violence there, is unfathomable. And it will inevitably take a toll on those NHS staff involved in the response; I know from my time at Guy's and St Thomas' how hard incidents like this can be for those treating victims and supporting families, but I can only imagine how much more affecting it has been for those treating children. We will make sure colleagues get any support they need – as we will for the people of Southport.

Sadly, the riots that followed in Southport, and then other towns and cities over the course of the week, also warrant – indeed they require – comment.

The deplorable violence, intimidation and thuggery we have seen – and particularly the arson attack on the hotel in Rotherham housing asylum seekers – can and should be lent no justification. It is fundamentally wrong, fundamentally un-British, and a source of deep shame.

But it is often in the worst of moments where the best of people can be seen.

The outpouring of solidarity in Southport, first for the families affected by the attack, and then for those whose homes, businesses and places of worship had been damaged by rioters.

The professionalism, too, of the NHS staff in Southport and elsewhere who are dealing with the consequences, and of course those in our police, fire and other services working to protect communities, restore order and fix the destruction caused.

It is they – not those rioting, and not those inciting and justifying violence from afar – who best represent our country, and British values – the values that led to the creation of the NHS and have sustained it since.

There are other things that have sustained the NHS, too. One of them is stoicism, that great British trait of carrying on through adversity. Another, importantly, is migration – people coming from across the globe to become vital colleagues, with almost 200 nationalities represented in the NHS workforce today.

So carrying on, and doing what needs to be done for the patients who need us, is what the NHS will do. It's what our colleagues in the North West did after the attack in Southport. It's what others have done and are doing now due to the riots – treating victims and perpetrators alike. But we shouldn't let dedication to duty disguise the fact that for many NHS workers, seeing this flare-up of racism will leave them feeling afraid and unwelcome.

To those colleagues, my message is simple: you are welcome, you are a valued member of our community, and that community should look after you.

And to those reading this in positions of leadership, my ask of you is equally simple: in your words, but more importantly in your actions, please ensure you are demonstrating that most British value of community, now more than ever. And specifically, show in your actions that when we say we have zero tolerance of racism towards our patients or colleagues, in whatever form it takes, we really mean it – even when it is difficult or uncomfortable.

Thank you.

Amanda Pritchard, NHS Chief Executive

2.) Holding a conversation

It is important to acknowledge that our diverse workforce, regardless of their ethnicity, heritage, religion or background, will be deeply affected by any scenes of unrest, rioting and violence.

Some of our people will be affected by fear for their own personal safety or the safety of their loved ones in their personal lives. Others may be more fearful because of the job they do makes them more vulnerable at this time.

Below are some key considerations and suggested points of discussions to have with your teams and individuals within your team. We should all take the time to listen and understand these real fears, even where we do not have our own shared lived experiences.

Personal safety:

- Where our people live – this may impact someone's personal safety because they live in an area that could be a target for extremists. Our people may be fearful to leave their homes for personal safety or fear that their property may be a target for criminal activity.
- How our people travel to work – many of our staff will take public transport to work and may be fearful of being targeted whilst waiting or travelling on public transport.
- Lived experiences – Sadly many of our colleagues will have past and present lived experiences of racially motivated abuse, violence aggression and discrimination. These lived experiences will understandably impact how safe colleagues feel and may reignite past trauma.

Family safety

- Some staff may not just fear their own personal safety but feel concerned about family safety. They may also have family members whose businesses may be targeted, and livelihoods affected. It is important to take the time to listen to and understand family relationships, living arrangements, vulnerabilities and the fears associated with this.
- We must remember that during school holidays, many of our colleagues will not have the safety of schools to care for their children, particularly teenagers who are unlikely to be in any sort of formal childcare over the summer months. Those younger children that are in formal care arrangements, families may fear their safety in these establishments.
- Families across multiple generations may have vulnerable and/or elderly relatives where they are concerned about them leaving the house, even to undertake day to day tasks such as food shopping or even to access medical treatment that they may need.

Job Role safety

- Some of our roles across the Trust may make our colleagues feel more vulnerable, for example roles that involve community visiting, lone working or front door access to services. It is important to risk assess the roles and take appropriate actions to mitigate the risks and make our staff feel safe when in work and travelling to and from work.
- It is an unfortunate reality that our staff do sadly continue to receive abuse, including racist abuse, in the course of their duty. Racist abuse can range from discriminatory behaviour (such as refusing to be treated by an ethnically diverse colleague), abusive and discriminatory language to the extreme of violence, aggression and physical abuse.
- In some circumstances (non-urgent and non-life threatening) it may be appropriate to refuse treatment to anyone who is being verbally or physically abusive, aggressive, or discriminatory. This should always be a shared decision and take a risk-based approach. Please liaise with the relevant clinical lead.

- Ensure that you and your staff are aware of the any agreed Group procedure, relevant Trust procedures and any professional codes of conduct so they know what to do should an incident occur. Please refer to the [Violence-and-Aggression-Policy-HR053-SWBH.pdf](#)

Online safety

- Understanding individuals' online presence could be a useful discussion point. The Trust's social media policy outlines the Trust's expectations of appropriate behaviour and conduct whilst online. [Social-Media-Policy-HR072-SWBH.pdf](#)
- Disciplinary action may be taken where an individual's conduct is found to be in breach of our policies. [Disciplinary-Policy-HR003-SWBH.pdf](#)

Talking to your Team

You should have a discussion with your team to ensure everyone is made aware of the support available and knows how to access it. It also aids peer to peer support as different people may be impacted in different ways. This may be done through team meetings, huddles etc.

Key points of discussion:

- Ensure they have seen the CEO's messages (included in this guide and available on Connect) and are aware of the Trust's zero tolerance stance to racism and discrimination of any kind.
- Reiterate the Trust's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and that we expect all our colleagues to demonstrate the Trust's values and behaviours (Ambition, Respect, Compassion) **always**.
- Discuss mechanisms for speaking up or reporting should anyone experience or witness any racist, discriminatory, violent or aggressive behaviour / actions.
- Reassure them that support is available within the Trust and signpost the team to the avenues of support outlined in this guide.
- Ask the team how they are currently feeling and if they feel they need any specific support as a team (e.g. if the team are lone workers, or if they are at higher risk of being exposed to discriminatory behaviour from patients/visitors).
- Explain that different people can potentially be impacted in different ways (see safety considerations above). Offer them a confidential 1:1 meeting to discuss any personal safety or wellbeing concerns they may have on an individual level (inform them of how/when to contact you or offer some drop-in sessions).
- Acknowledge the additional anxiety that colleagues may be experiencing from exposure to heightened news coverage or social media, especially where misinformation is being spread. It may be beneficial for some people's mental health to limit their news and/or social media intake during this time. If colleagues are struggling, encourage self-care activities to help them unwind and detach (e.g. breathing exercises, physical exercise in a safe environment, good sleep hygiene, good nutrition and hydration etc.)
- Remind the team of expected standards of conduct and behaviour both at work and on social media. Make it clear that if anyone is found to be taking part in violent activities or hate crimes, including in riots and violent activities of the extremist groups (including actions on social media), we have a duty to refer hate crime to the Police and disciplinary action may be taken.

Talking to Individuals

You should offer your team members the opportunity to have a confidential 1:1 meeting should they be concerned about their safety or be impacted by what is happening.

Ensure you are as accessible as possible by stating when you are available for a 1:1 or establishing drop-in sessions, so that a meeting can be held quickly if needed.

The conversation will be tailored to the individual (keeping in mind the safety considerations above) but could include the following:

- How are you feeling?
- Do you have any specific concerns about the current situation? How is it impacting you and/or those close to you?
- Is there anything you're currently doing to stay safe?
- Is there any other support you feel you need to stay safe? Discuss any short-term workplace adjustments that may be necessary.
- Signpost the individual to the wellbeing support avenues available in the Trust and external resources.
- Remind the individual that they can talk to you, or any other relevant manager (it may help to name other specific people they can go to in your department) at any time if they have any concerns.

People Engagement Teams

As an additional avenue of support, staff may wish to approach members of their People Engagement Team to highlight any concerns they have and make suggestions for actions that may help colleagues feel safe at work.

People Engagement Team leads and members are encouraged to support the dissemination of the Trust's guidance and support offer during this difficult time and ensure teams are appropriately supported across the Group.

3.) Support Options available

Safety Advice

Our security team are providing an increased presence at both City and Sandwell during this time.

However, we are still asking staff to stay vigilant and plan extra time when travelling to and from our hospital sites and in around the local area.

We would like to remind staff where possible they should:

- **Walk with a friend/colleague** – Find a friend/colleague who will be taking a similar route.
- **Ensure you lock your car** – Wind up your windows and lock your car as you leave.
- **Charge your phone** – Make sure your phone is fully charged before setting out so that it'll be working should you need it.
- **Plan your route** – Try to stick to well-lit areas where you know it is likely that there will be people around.
- **Be alert at all times** – Avoid wearing headphones and items of clothing that obscure your vision. When travelling along a road it is safer to walk in the direction of oncoming traffic, so you are visible to drivers.
- **Keep expensive items hidden** – Keep expensive items such as mobile phones and iPods away from sight.
- **Carry a deterrent** – Having a deterrent such as a screech alarm or personal safety device can give you extra peace of mind. Our security team have a stock of keyring torch alarms if anyone would like one for personal security.
- **Remember to keep where you work secure** – Before you leave work, close the windows to prevent any intruders breaking and entering.

If you feel unsafe at work or notice any suspicious behaviour within your ward or department and require security, please contact the security team:

- City Security – 0121 507 4133
- Sandwell Security – 0121 507 3163

Note: In an emergency you should always call the police on 999. You can also call the security team on any internal phone on ext. 2222

Short-Term Workplace Adjustments

Where staff are feeling vulnerable in their roles, their personal safety or fearing for the safety of a dependent adult or child, there are ways we can support our people.

Some options are included below. These are intended as a guide or to prompt discussions but will be dependent on the job role, service, level of risk and appropriate authorisation.

- Adjusting start and finish times where feasible to ensure that staff are not travelling on their own or on public transport late at night or very early in the morning.

- Closing services early and sending staff home early where there are immediate concerns in the local area. This would require senior authorisation and a risk-based approach. Please liaise with your Group Directors.
- Considering more home or agile working where feasible for an agreed period where there are unrests in the local area.
- Reiterating zero tolerance stance and reporting any incidents.
- Doubling up on home and community visits where feasible.
- Encouraging staff to use their lone working devices so that emergency support can be accessed if needed.
- Where there is active unrest in the local area and time sensitive care interventions are required, please escalate to your Group Directors for a decision.

Wellbeing Support

National or regional helplines/Resources:

- If you are feeling affected by events or need support, there are several resources available both at a national and local level including [NHS England's confidential text support service](#), we you can access by texting SHOUT to 85258 for support 24/7. This service is available to all our NHS colleagues who have had a tough day, who are feeling worried or overwhelmed, or who have a lot on their mind and need to talk it through.
- There is also supportive information about racism and mental health on the [MIND](#) website.
- [Addressing Islamophobia in the Workplace](#)
- [Understanding and Addressing Islamophobia in the Workplace](#)

Internal avenues of support:

The following resources are available to staff to help and provide support during this time. Please speak to your manager in the first instance. You can also seek support via the following:

- Human Resources: 0121 507 6680 or swb-tr.swbh-GM-HR-Enquiries@nhs.net
- Freedom to Speak up Champions – [Freedom to speak up \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)
- Occupational Health – 01215073306 or swbh.ohreferrals@nhs.net
- Free and confidential staff counselling service – 0800 8824102
- Your Staff Network – [Staff Networks \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)
- Chaplaincy Team – [Chaplaincy/Spiritual Care Service \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)
- Trade Union support – [Trade Unions \(swbh.nhs.uk\)](https://www.swbh.nhs.uk)
- EDI Team swbh.equality-and-diversity@nhs.net
- Medical Wellbeing Leads (Dr Mike Blaber, Dr Huma Naqvi, and Dr Vikrant Venugopalan)
- Our Wellbeing Hubs (located at City and Sandwell) also offer confidential chats with trained wellbeing coaches (as well as meditation and massage options). This can be useful for those that may need to decompress. Call 0121 507 3306 for an appointment.
- The Muslim Liaison Group will be holding a drop-in session for all colleagues on Friday 9th August 10:00am to 12:00 noon at Room 5, Postgraduate Centre, City Hospital.

4.) Taking a strong anti-discrimination and zero tolerance stance

It is important to reiterate that there is no place for discrimination, violence, abuse, or harassment in our Trust, both from staff and from patients.

It will be considered a **criminal act** if any staff or patients are found to be taking part in any violent activities or hate crimes, including in riots and violent activities of the extremist groups.

The Trust's behaviour framework is available [here](#) and we expect staff to adhere to our values of Ambition, Respect and Compassion at all times. Any unlawful activity will be treated as such and will be referred to the Police.

The duty to refer hate crime to the Police extends to social media use. Social media can be incredibly harmful in spreading misinformation, therefore, staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Trust's social media policy which can be found [here](#).

We are strongly committed to actions that build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open, diversity is valued, and everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice, or discrimination. We are also committed to working alongside our staff networks to become an anti-discrimination organisation.

We want to make clear that as an NHS organisation, we will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination, or violence. It will be taken seriously and handled appropriately under relevant policies and procedures.

To understand the law and our obligations, view our Equal Opportunities and Managing Diversity Policy [here](#).

5.) How to report

If you have experienced bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination, or violence, you must report it. You can do so in the following ways:

- Speak to your line manager (or next-in-line manager)
- Speak to Human Resources
- Speak to a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian
- Speak to a trade union representative

For incidents involving patients/visitors please refer to the [Violence and Aggression Policy](#). You should also report incidents via the Safeguard system.

For incidents involving staff, please refer to the [Dignity at Work policy](#).