



Jan's Weekly Update

Jan Ditheridge, Chief Executive

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“Mislike me not for my complexion

The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun”

For those who know your Shakespeare you will recognise this is a line from The Merchant of Venice spoken by the Prince of Morocco to Portia (Act 2 Scene 1).

He went onto say that while he may look different if a cut was made his blood is the same colour as everyone else. His point? Judge me as you would judge anyone else I am anyone else!.

Why am I recalling my O level Shakespeare and quoting it back to you? Well it was quoted at a meeting I was at yesterday about Race Equality and captured the essence of everything I had been thinking about for the last couple of weeks.

In Northern Ireland



I was on leave last week in Northern Ireland – a beautiful part of the world, blessed with a stunning landscape, friendly, warm and welcoming people and a history and culture that stretches back centuries. Most of us will remember that that they have endured very difficult times in their recent past and the impact of that is still evident. The “Troubles” which they openly talk about are rooted in many complex things, on this occasion religion and which “tribe” you come from playing a major role – not the colour of your skin. They have come a long way to create a different way of living together – compromise and understanding at the heart of it in my view. It's humbling to see how they have worked together to create peace in their communities while accepting

difference, often living as neighbours, once enemies now friends.

In Manchester

This week I've been in Manchester at The NHS Confederation Conference – you may remember I attend every year and we take a different team from Shropcom to hear from NHS leaders, network with colleagues from around the country and discuss a range of issues that affect us.

This year I chose to go to many of the sessions that directly impact on or are about staff. So I attended a session about Health and Well Being of Staff – I think we are doing a lot but what are others doing and can I get any fresh ideas – I heard from one individual who has a background in HR who has recently joined the NHS and was shocked at how little there was in his Trust to support staff to stay well, mentally and physically and to support them when they're not well. I was able to assure him that what he found wasn't the case everywhere (I'm confident that it's not happening here). However I wasn't as confident that we are doing enough to support each other to stay well at work and think differently about what type of work people could do if unable to do their present job for a while because of ill health. I think we can do more, build on what we've achieved so far. The national team working on this have offered to introduce us to another area who are community based and have a rural and urban mix of communities they serve to see if there is any shared learning.



We all have a role to play to ensure that work is somewhere we want to be, we know how to recognise when things are tough and where to go for help and leaders need to be able to agree a plan when things are going wrong for an individual which doesn't always mean being off sick for a long time. Two things from that session stayed with me – NHS staff aren't good at looking after themselves and we need to give ourselves permission to do that, and making everyone feel included and valued in the team significantly increases mental well-being at work. If everybody really counts it makes a massive difference.

The meeting with the Shakespeare quote was at 7am! But well worth the effort of an early start – we discussed how people from a BME background experience work in the NHS and still we know nationally and locally in our own organisation it can be different and too often a poorer experience.

No-one in our organisation should feel they are being treated differently or denied opportunity because of their colour, religion, gender or sexual orientation, but they are telling us in our staff survey that sometimes they do. I have responsibility to change that, the Board do and we all do.

One of our core values is **Everyone Counts** – and every day I see you do things that makes me think you live that value but maybe we need to stop and ask ourselves why even one person feels they are treated differently “because of their complexion” and what we need to do to make that different round here.



There were lots of events to celebrate the NHS in its 70th year at the conference. What stood out for me? Staff stories - The 90 year old lady who started her training the year the NHS was born – talking of repairing rubber gloves with bicycle repair kits! Boiling bandages! And the still very clear memory that people could finally access healthcare without being asked for money, and no longer denied care if they didn't have it.

Look at how far we've come in terms of life expectancy – the NHS have played a big part in that.

1940s Average Life Expectancy

- Men—63 years
- Women—68 years

Infant Mortality

- 57 deaths per 1,000 live births

2010s Average Life Expectancy

- Men—79 years
- Women—83 years

Infant Mortality

- 3.6 deaths per 1,000 live births

Now we have to look to the next 70 years – what do our services need to look like to ensure our Children grow up mentally and physically healthy in this modern world and how to we ensure people age and end their lives well.

The Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, set out his ambitions for the NHS in the final speech of the conference with the focus on:

- **The first 1000 days of life – so our children have the best start from conception**
- **The last 1000 days – so we age well and die well**
- **Cancer survival rates are the best in the world**
- **Young People's mental health - Our young people get the mental health support they need, before it becomes a crisis.**

There was also a clear message that community services have a big part to play in all of these ambitions and that we need to grow the services that support the ambitions.

But we know that don't we.....

Until next week

Jan Ditheridge

Chief Executive

