



THE ROYAL
COLLEGE OF
MIDWIVES

Race matters

A statement by the RCM

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Back in 2018 we reached out to our black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) members, to ask their opinions and hear about their experiences as midwives and maternity support workers (MSWs). Alongside this we've been working with BRAP, a great equalities charity who have challenged us and held up a mirror to the way we are as an organisation, by talking to staff, activists and members.

We've learnt a lot through this process, and we've had some hard-hitting feedback. Most of all we've learnt that we have a lot of work to do to improve the experience for our BAME members and wider community.

The statistics show that, just in the UK, BAME women are more than five times more likely to die in childbirth, plus are at significantly greater risk of other adverse pregnancy outcomes. BAME midwives and MSWs are more likely to experience bullying at work, more likely to face disciplinary processes and less likely to advance in their careers.

As an organisation, as professionals and a community with a common purpose, we must acknowledge that there is a problem. We all need to be part of the solution.

First and foremost, we must look at ourselves as an organisation. From the limited data we have available we estimate about 15% of the midwifery and MSW workforce is BAME. The RCM remains an overwhelmingly white organisation and we must tackle that and ensure our organisation becomes more truly representative of our membership.

Over the years we have taken a number of actions to address race diversity. We made Freedom of Information requests into disciplinary proceedings against BAME midwives in London that provided the evidence of the level of discrimination. We have participated in NHS inclusion initiatives. We send a delegation to the TUC Black Workers Conference and we have produced guidance for members in implementing the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES). For several years, we have been instrumental

in supporting the Mary Seacole Awards and we are currently chair of the NHS Staff side Equalities and Diversities Group. But it is fair to say, despite their value, these are one-off actions and not part of a sustainable strategy with the focus it deserves.

There is no quick fix solution and some of the work we produce might not make a visible difference to our members in the short term. However, our focus on the BAME experience will work as a constant thread in everything we do. So where will we start? We will invest in more training and awareness for RCM staff. More awareness and orientation for our reps. Challenging our unconscious bias will be a big focus.

This doesn't mean token gestures in making BAME midwives or MSWs visible on our platforms. It means using our publications and platforms to include and accurately represent BAME experiences as a fundamental part of what we are discussing. Most importantly it means continually listening to and understanding the experiences of our BAME members and responding accordingly. If there are calls for a Diversity or Inclusion network for members, we'll set one up.

We will ensure our policy work pays attention to the lived experiences of BAME members and women and families in maternity care.

We recognise the challenge in building the confidence and trust of our BAME members and the midwives and MSWs who do not see a place for themselves within the RCM. It's a problem that must be solved and this is our commitment to you to make it happen.



Race matters for the NHS workforce

The Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) has been developed as a tool to measure improvements in the workforce with respect to BAME staff. It is an NHS initiative that has been conceived by the national NHS Equality & Diversity Council; through collaboration with NHS staff and independent researchers. The challenge to ensure BAME staff are treated fairly and their talents valued and developed is one that all NHS organisations need to meet.

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-collections/workforce-race-equality-standard-wres>

Race matters for NHS users

MBRRACE-UK is a UK collaboration investigating maternal and infant deaths and severe morbidity. The aim of **MBRRACE-UK** is to provide robust information to support the delivery of safe, equitable, high quality, patient-centred maternal, newborn and infant health services.

According to a recent study from a group that looks at the causes of maternal deaths, stillbirths and infant deaths, black women in Britain are five times more likely to die as a result of complications in pregnancy than white women. And the risk is increasing year on year.

<https://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/mbrrace-uk/reports>

Become active in the RCM

If you are a RCM member who wants to make a difference you can take up an Activist role (workplace representative, branch officer, MSW Advocate), get active in your local RCM Branch or join the network of RCM members who are supporting our RCM Race Matters agenda. Further information on becoming active within the RCM can be found <https://www.rcm.org.uk/influencing/activists/> or email Activists@rcm.org.uk

2020 Actions include:

1. Training for RCM staff on race awareness
2. Training for RCM activists on race awareness
3. Ensuring race awareness is considered explicitly in all RCM work programmes and projects, e.g.
 - I. Leadership programmes
 - II. Conference programmes
 - III. Every policy initiative
 - IV. Branch and Workplace Activity
4. Provide guidance and opportunities for discussion to RCM Networks



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The RCM is the only trade union and professional association dedicated to serving midwifery and the whole midwifery team. We provide workplace advice and support, professional and clinical guidance and information, and learning opportunities with our broad range of events, conferences and online resources. For more information visit the RCM website at www.rcm.org.uk

The Royal College of Midwives is and has always been neutral in party politics and we work with politicians from across the political spectrum.

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