

DEVELOPING EQUITABLE INTERNATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE - RESPONDING TO THE NEED: BRADFORD'S EXPERIENCE

Good health is a global goal that requires international collaboration to achieve reductions in health inequalities and to share best practice. Responding to the needs of minority ethnic groups or diverse communities is a challenge confronting many organisations in Europe. The moral and ethical value of equality has been sold throughout the world. It is every human being's fundamental right to health services, irrespective of their ability to pay. No one should be excluded or suffer particular difficulty in accessing and effectively using services because of their age, race, disability, gender, colour, social background, sexuality, illness (such as HIV or AIDS status), nationality, ethnic origin, marital or legal status or religion.

One Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's (BTH) objective is to ensure that all its services are accessible, appropriate and sensitive to the needs of all members of the community. BTH has been addressing the equality agenda for a number of years, from the appointment of the first interpreter (cultural mediator) some 40 years ago to an establishment of a dedicated equality and diversity department with 17 members of staff and annual budget in excess of £500,000.

BTH recognises the importance of being an outward-looking organisation and has been involved in international health care in a number of countries for many years. BTH has established an International Health Link Steering Committee (IHLSC), chaired by Trust's Chairman Mr John Ryan. The aims of the committee include:

- ⇒ Establish criteria for suitable international health links
- ⇒ Support the establishment of health links between Bradford Hospitals and international partners
- ⇒ Use the link to promote greater awareness of the health issues in developing countries among the Trust staff, and to learn from best international practices, for example Pursuing Perfection
- ⇒ Explore educational opportunities through secondment and exchange of health professionals.
- ⇒ Explore ways of reducing global health inequalities through transfer of knowledge, expertise, equipment and medicines.

Currently, positive work is being undertaken in Africa, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Nepal, and Pakistan. The benefits of such work include:

- **Education and Professional Development.** There are wide potential benefits for both individual staff and the organisation. Exchange of

healthcare staff between partnership organisations can improve their knowledge and skills from experience in different contexts.

- **Awareness.** Raising of awareness about international health inequalities. The scale of global inequalities in health remains largely unrecognised. Health partnerships provide a chance to improve understanding of health burdens in developing countries and to make these real and personal to staff in the UK.
- **Communication.** Strengthening cultural links and friendship to enhance international cooperation. Health partnerships provide health organisations with the opportunity to be outward looking and acknowledge the global nature of healthcare.
- **Research.** Research in areas important to the health of developing countries is much neglected. Health partnerships between academic units can provide the expertise and commitment required to prompt valuable research and development.
- **Technical Support.** Professional exchanges to provide one off professional support. This can provide direct patient benefit in developing countries where access to specialist support is scarce. Benefits to NHS organisations include better communicable disease control through exchange of information and development of clinical expertise.

BTH is currently working with 13 partners of the European Union as part of the Migrant Friendly Hospital project, and is developing working relationships with colleagues in the USA.

BTH's international healthcare projects form part of the overall Equality Strategy (1). The Equality Strategy offers a framework for developing, monitoring and evaluating equality initiatives. The Equality Strategy and the implementation process are central to the hospitals core business plan. It is incorporated into senior managers' personal objectives, ensuring that the equality and diversity features prominently in their objectives and personnel development plans for every member of staff.

BTH equality initiatives are monitored by the Equality Steering Committee, chaired Mr David Jackson, chief executive.

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(1) For copies of the Bradford Teaching Hospitals Equality Strategy contact:
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