



**22 July 2020**

Dear colleague,

It is recognised that this may be a worrying time for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff. As Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, in partnership with Trade Union Colleagues, I want to engage with you and provide you with reassurance that we are actively responding to the data, which suggests that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds may be disproportionately affected by COVID19. Outlined below is a proposed set of actions involving you, your Manager and Belfast HSC Trust as your employer.

Positive action is being taken to ensure BAME staff and their families are being protected and are not unnecessarily exposed to risks. For this reason, all managers are arranging to meet with their BAME team members. The purpose of this meeting is to 'check in' with you in order to ensure all the necessary steps to protect you have been implemented. You should expect to be contacted by your manager shortly, or alternatively if you so wish please do not hesitate to contact your line manager directly. If you would prefer to meet with a member of the Human Resource team in the first instance, please contact [Samantha.Whann@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:Samantha.Whann@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

Many BAME colleagues are understandably concerned about their own and their families' health at this time. I would encourage you to feel confident discussing any concerns you may have about COVID-19 and the impact on you and your family, in order to ensure you are receiving all the appropriate support and so that any concerns or risks are identified and rapidly acted upon as required.

My expectation is that this will be a sensitive and comprehensive conversation, undertaken in accordance with Belfast Trust Values and behaviours. The meeting may be face to face, observing strict social distancing, or if you would prefer, it may be a virtual or phone meeting. My HR team have prepared a template to facilitate this discussion and you will be provided with a copy of the completed template for your future reference.

I would remind you that testing is in place for staff and their family members who present symptoms of COVID-19 and there is sufficient capacity for current demand. In accordance with PHA guidance, you are encouraged (as are any family members who live with you) if you develop symptoms, to get tested as soon as possible. For more information on testing [click here](#).

All colleagues who may need to use a FFP3 mask will be FIT tested to ensure they are as safe as possible while working with COVID-19 patients. More information is available by [clicking here](#).

If you are on sick leave related to COVID-19 or need to isolate due to a family member with symptoms, your manager will provide regular follow up contact with either them directly and or the designated health and wellbeing lead. I also want to reassure you, that should you need to take sick leave or isolate because of COVID-19, it will not affect either your earnings, future progress or job role. To help support staff, a series of frequently asked questions (FAQ's) have been developed which can be found by [clicking here](#)

As a Trust staff member, you have full access to a comprehensive range of health and wellbeing initiatives including psychology support. It is recognised that as a BAME colleague, you may be under significant stress at this time. Any colleague wanting to access this service can do this by clicking on each of the following links for further information and guidance;

**[Staying Safe During COVID-19](#)**

**[Supporting & Caring For Staff & Their Families During COVID-19](#)**

**[Q&A for Healthcare Workers](#)**

**[Wellbeing Support For Employees](#)**


**[B Well Website](#)**

Going forward, the Employment Equality Team are seeking to establish a BAME Staff Network Group. If you would like to get involved, please e-mail: [Samantha.Whann@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:Samantha.Whann@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you are doing and to reaffirm that everything will be undertaken to protect you at work.

If you require any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Human Resources on telephone 028 9615 9615.

Yours sincerely,



Jacqui Kennedy  
Director of Human Resources &  
Organisational Development



Ray Rafferty  
Trade Union Side Lead



Laurence Burke  
Chair, LNC