Bullying in electronic job planning – LNCs follow up survey

Dear LNC Chair

As you will know, we have just finished running our Bullying in electronic job planning survey. We have finalised our analysis of the results of that survey and we will be working hard to help consultant deal with any improper practices which we have suspected, but now have evidence to show, are taking place during the job planning process.

The results of our survey do not make for pretty reading with over 50% of respondents telling us that they have had a negative experience in respect of their last job planning meeting. Moreover, some 28% thought that inappropriate techniques had been used to get their agreement and 32% of respondents thought that in their last job planning meeting they’d been bullied.

Even more troublingly, Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) women, followed by BAME men, seem to have experienced the most profound problems in the process, with 41% of BAME women reporting that they had been bullied and 26% of BAME men feeling that they had been bullied. This suggests there are significant race as well as gender equality issues that must be addressed urgently.

We regard those numbers as being completely unacceptable. We believe we need to add clarity to these initial findings, the data we have gathered suggests that there is a problem across the country but we need more detail – we need to find out more about what is happening to consultants where they work. That is why we have developed the attached follow up survey which we have designed for you, as LNC Chairs, to use within your own trusts so as better understand what is going on the ground when it comes to job planning. (The follow-up survey is designed, as its name suggests, to follow the initial job planning survey we circulated nationally; I attach the initial survey that you may also want to circulate. See below)

For clarity, it is not at all our intention to be prescriptive about how you might choose to use this survey (and, indeed, you might choose to not use it all – though, were you to make that decision, I would ask that you and your committee take some time to reconsider that decision at some point in the future). The questions are designed as a straightforward survey which you could send to your colleagues to find out what the situation is within your particular trust. Such information is powerful both locally and nationally, you would be able to use that information to take the issue up directly with your trust’s senior management structure.

If you do choose to use either of the surveys I would be very grateful if you would also share your local results with us in respect of both initial and follow up survey data: such information will inform the
BMA’s Consultants Committee policy development and our interactions with central structures within the health service.

It may be that you’re confident that there isn’t an issue of bullying during job planning at your trust, and of course we can only respect your local knowledge and experience in being able to make that judgement. However, it may also be the case that you’re unsure about whether there is an issue or not; in that case perhaps you might want to circulate the initial survey (linked above) to your colleagues to ascertain whether there is a problem to address. If the initial survey is positive you may decide to follow up with the more focused local survey questions.

I firmly believe that no responsible employer would ever tolerate the kinds of results that we have seen to date in our national survey, and I very much hope that if you present your trust with detailed evidence of this kind of bullying, then they will have a clear responsibility to act decisively to safeguard the wellbeing of their staff.

The UK Consultants Committee of the BMA will be working hard at a national level to leverage similar action.

I would also like to quickly take this opportunity to let you know that it is CC’s intention produce regular short surveys for our members which will cover real-world issues that impact on the working lives of consultants. We hope to use the information we gather as the basis for drafting our guidance for members, so we can tailor our guidance to reflect the lived experience of our members. We want to ensure that we remain relevant and reactive to the needs of our members; to take action of the issues that impact on their working lives.

It is very much my intention that we should share those surveys with you – both for you to use the actual surveys to gather data at a local level and to feed back any data we gather nationally to keep you informed as LNC Chairs. We will save all of the surveys to the LNC hub, so that you pick and choose what might be of relevance and use to you in your trusts.

Yours sincerely

Rob Harwood
Chair, BMA Consultants Committee