

# Improving culture and inclusion at the BMA

A report from the BMA's Culture and  
Inclusion Oversight Group



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### Foreword

I am delighted to share this overview of the work that the BMA has been doing to strengthen our culture and embed inclusion. The activities described in this report reflect the progress made since the publication of the Daphne Romney QC investigation into sexism and sexual harassment in October 2019.



The Romney investigation revealed many uncomfortable truths for the BMA, but it also ushered in an appetite for change amongst the elected leadership team and staff as the broad recommendations were accepted in principle and further actions such as the introduction of a speak up guardian were added.

One of my roles as an independent non-executive director of the BMA is to chair the Culture and Inclusion Oversight group which was set up to oversee the implementation of those recommendations from a wider diversity perspective ensuring diversity across all strands.

The group draws from a diverse range of staff and elected members to ensure all voices are heard.

Covid-19 has had an impact on some of the work. Plans to roll out face-to-face active bystander training more broadly, for example, have not been possible because of lockdown restrictions. That said, plenty of progress has still been made.

I hope you read with interest the work that has been done and is continuing so that we can improve the working culture for staff and elected members.

There is, of course, still much to do. I look forward to working with the BMA staff and elected members on the group to forge a modern, progressive and human centred organisation that continues to do its very best to support its members through these difficult times.

Best wishes

Elisa

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Non-clinical non-executive director  
BMA Board

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In October 2019, the BMA set up the Culture and Inclusion Oversight Group to oversee the implementation of the Romney review recommendations. As you may recall Daphne Romney QC investigated sexism at the BMA and made recommendations which were accepted in full by BMA council. As the name of the group suggests, it also encompasses challenges we need to address across all diversity strands.

The group is chaired by Elisa Nardi, an independent non-executive director to the board and includes members of council, the board and senior members of staff from across the business including chief executive officer Tom Grinyer. It is a great example of staff and members working in partnership to address some of the challenges facing the BMA. Members of the group are listed in appendix 1.

This report highlights the progress that has been made and includes updates on the introduction of a speak up guardian; new training for members, staff and managers; the creation of staff networks; making our committees more open and inclusive; and enhancements to the BMA code of conduct and resolution process.

## Speaking up

This area of work relates to four recommendations concerning responsibility of behaviour and implementing best practice from other organisations.

Following consultation with similar organisations in the sector as well as BMA staff, the BMA have appointed an external Speak Up Guardian; an independent and objective person that staff and elected members can speak to and raise concerns around behaviour.

The selection process involved a broad range of BMA people including members of the leadership team; staff with expertise in equality, diversity and inclusion; GMB representatives (the BMA staff trade union); the procurement team and an elected member representative.

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**Mary Walsh of The Guardian Service** was unanimously appointed to the position. Mary is an experienced speak up guardian working in the NHS. She has 20 years' experience in diversity and inclusion, and HR. The panel were particularly impressed by her experience of supporting people through complex issues and her empathetic approach.

The Speak Up Guardian Service is a completely independent and confidential service to discuss matters relating to work grievances, whistleblowing, bullying and harassment, staff safety and anything that doesn't feel quite right at the BMA. Mary Walsh is there for staff and elected members who feel, for whatever reason, they cannot use the usual channels to raise concerns, such as their direct line manager, director or committee chair.

The service launched on 22 June 2020 and is available to staff and elected members from Monday – Friday, 8am to 8pm on **0333 577 6116** or by email **contact@theguardianservice.co.uk**

Internally, the BMA will be working with staff trade union representatives from the GMB to see how the association can develop a 'just and learning culture' by adopting learnings from the work already underway in some Trusts in England that are looking to move from a blame culture, to one where mistakes are learning opportunities.

## Learning how to identify and call out poor behaviour

Significant progress has been made around the development of training for members and staff at the BMA. The corporate development and human resources teams have been leading all our training activity. This has included face-to face (now virtual) active by-stander training for the senior leadership team aimed at equipping them with the skills to call out bad behaviour. This is currently being rolled out to BMA staff and elected members – as part of the BMA's wider Equality Matters programme, which makes a clear commitment to equality for those involved with the BMA and in the NHS. Online bespoke training modules have also been launched for members and staff; the topics covered include challenging behaviour,

inclusion essentials, inclusive leadership, understanding unconscious bias and the impact of micro-behaviours.

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Every committee member will also undergo training in valuing difference (equality, diversity and inclusion), anti-bullying, active by-stander and collegiate working. Further mandatory training for committee chairs and co-chairs will help them develop skills in managing meetings, identify and deal with bad behaviour and understand the principles of fairness and equality in making

committee appointments. For an overview of the learning and development available for staff and members see Appendix 2.

## Making our committees more open and inclusive

A committee mentoring training programme has been established to help newcomers to learn more about the committee's work and familiarise themselves with the workings of the BMA as well as a step to promote a better gender balance across committees.

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All mentors have significant medico-political experience and go through CPD (continued professional development) accredited training before becoming a mentor.

**Committee members can also access the following guidance and support:**

- Virtual meetings guidance
- Family friendly policy including childcare guidance
- Chairing and co-chairing a meeting guidance
- Chairing virtual meetings guidance
- Committee members' induction guidance
- BMA Leadership programmes
- BMA Valuing difference programme
- BMA Wellbeing and support services
- BMA chair and deputy chair training
- Code of conduct and policies

## A focus on culture and respecting diversity

While much of the training is also intended to improve the culture, specific steps have been taken in this space to foster a better environment for all at the BMA.

We are procuring new recruitment software for the BMA to enable 'blind' recruitment and hugely improved ability to monitor diversity at various stages of the process. We now advertise all of our roles on diversity platforms aimed at encouraging applications from the LGBTQ+, BAME and disabled communities.

In terms of bettering the staff balance of underrepresented groups, the HR learning and development team will be providing recruitment and selection training to all managers by the end of 2020 with the aim of ensuring gender balanced interview panels and processes are embedded.

we are also setting up groups to strengthen our commitment to diversity. This includes setting up a network of elected women representatives and a BAME network.

A BAME staff network has been established at the BMA, which is valuable in ensuring greater consultation on issues which affect BAME staff and acknowledging intersectionality.

In addition to this, a number of other staff networks have been established for colleagues to come together to share ideas, raise awareness around issues and concerns, and support career development, learning and mentoring. Again, they have been initiated and led by staff who share a common interest or characteristic such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or

those at a similar 'life-stage'. So far, as well as the BAME network, we now have a women's group, an LGBTQ+ network (known as Out@BMA), a parent's network and a nascent mental health group. Guidance has also been distributed across the association on how to set up a staff network and the support available to them from the BMA, and this has been welcomed across the organisation.

An overarching BMA staff diversity advisory group is being planned, with the chairs from each of the staff networks sitting on the group and chaired by the HR director. This advisory panel will feed into projects, workstreams and new processes around the business to ensure inclusion and diversity is embedded at all levels.

From a members' perspective we are also setting up groups to strengthen our commitment to diversity. This includes setting up a network of elected women representatives and a BAME network. In addition, the BMA is also exploring how we use diversity allies to champion equality and respect, creating a welcoming and supportive BMA for everyone.

An enhanced resolution process

The BMA code of conduct and resolution process have been in place at the BMA since 2017. They were introduced to support positive behaviours and deal with complaints and concerns about poor behaviours. The process has been used successfully to resolve many informal complaints and to resolve a number of substantial complaints formally, with adjudications by panels of three doctors.

The BMA has been committed to build on this already successful work to make the resolution process as robust as possible. Following an independent report commissioned by the BMA in 2018 an external, independent, support line (**0333 212 3618**) was implemented as a first point of contact for those wanting to discuss poor behaviour that they have experienced or witnessed or to bring a complaint. Based on recommendations from this report and the Daphne Romney QC report, to prevent any possible appearance of conflicts of interest during hearings the pool of members who sit on panels has been widened and new grassroots members have been recruited and trained. A booklet about the resolution process has been produced and made available to staff and members, as well as a guide on the BMA's behaviour principles. To bolster this process, support is available to complainants

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Additionally, all committee listservers have been appointed assessors to consider any concerns raised by staff or members about listserver posts and make recommendations for further action.

## Next steps

A major group of recommendations that will form a significant part of the groups work will be looking at changes to the way BMA committees operate. Some of this work has been delayed as the organisation has had to prioritise supporting members through COVID19.

In the coming months work will continue with committees to consider: the monitoring of appointment practices; buddying schemes; improved use of roundtables and breakout groups; and systems that ensure that meetings do not take place without everyone eligible being invited.

**The Culture and Inclusion Oversight group will continue to oversee projects and actions that:**

- **promote equal rights and opportunities, tackle discrimination or disadvantage and create an open and inclusive culture for our members, employees and stakeholders**
- **support committees to be effective, efficient and represent the diversity of our membership**
- **enable its democratic structures to reflect the voice and demands of our members at a local, intermediate, national and UK level in line with the BMA's strategic priorities**

For further questions about the work of the Culture and Inclusion Oversight group please contact, head of council secretariat **Matt Lasham** [mlasham@bma.org.uk](mailto:mlasham@bma.org.uk)

# Appendix 1

## Who's involved

### The membership of the group as it currently stands is:

**Dr Katie Bramall-Stainer**, council member

**Dr Peter Curry**, council member

**Dr Jacky Davis**, council member

**Yasemin Dil**, head of member development and inclusion

**Stella Dunn**, head of professionalism and guidance

**Gordon Fletcher**, head of internal communications

**Dr Helen Fidler**, council and board director

**Ursula Fuller**, GMB representative

**Dr Alex Freeman**, council member

**Tom Grinyer**, CEO

**Nicky Jayesinghe**, director of corporate development

**Angela Kyle**, head of committee services

**Matt Lasham**, head of council secretariat

**John Macey**, director of HR

**Dr Helena McKeown**, representative body chair

**Dr Chaand Nagpaul** CBE, council chair/chair of the board

**Elisa Nardi**, non-clinical non-executive director (chair)

**Deborah Oliver**, director of engagement and communications

**Jill Vickerman**, national director, Scotland

**Matt Saywell**, GMB representative

## Appendix 2

### Training opportunities

Training for elected members	Progress
<a href="#">Leadership programme (foundation and wadvanced level)</a>	Established and previously being delivered face to face. Now being delivered virtually.
<a href="#">Valuing difference programme</a>	Established and previously being delivered face to face. Now being delivered virtually.
<a href="#">EDI online modules</a>	Through BMJ Learning. Available to all members.
<a href="#">Effective influencing at the BMA (online)</a>	Through BMJ Learning. Aimed at committee members.
Chair and deputy chair training (members and relevant staff)	Established and delivery begun in March 2020. Now being delivered virtually.
<a href="#">Committee mentoring programme training</a>	Established and being delivered.
Bespoke online behaviours and cultural training modules (online).	Being developed. Due for launch September 2020
Training for BMA staff	Progress
Active by-stander training (staff)	Pilot delivered to SLT Feb 2020. Now transferred to virtual learning. Procured for all staff and commencing in September.
Face to face EDI training for staff	Created by the external provider for similar training for members. Virtual sessions being rolled out from September.
Equality, diversity and inclusion online modules	Originally developed for members, but staff now have access through the learning hub.
Recruitment and selection training.	Training content reviewed with input from BAME and other staff networks. L&D team fixing new dates for further R&S training for all interview panel members (postponed due to Covid-19) but exploring transferring to 'virtual'. Target to train all managers by end of 2020. Considering developing online module.