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NHS England
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27 July 2016

To: NHS Trust Chief Executives
Cc: NHS Staff Survey Leads
Directors of HR

Dear Colleague,

Hearing from as many people as possible through the NHS Staff Survey

The staff survey continues to be one of the most important sources of information we collect in the NHS. As you will know there are [clear links between levels of staff engagement and a range of outcomes for trusts](#), including patient satisfaction, patient mortality, trust performance ratings, staff absenteeism and turnover.

The results of the 2015 survey showed the highest levels of staff engagement we have seen in the last five years. This is a real achievement and we would like to thank you and your staff for all the hard work that has gone into making this happen.

In the 2015 NHS Staff Survey, we heard from more staff than ever before. Last year, 153 of the 241 participating trusts chose to undertake a census approach (asking all their staff to respond to the staff survey rather than a sample) and overall we heard from 299,000 staff compared to 203,000 in 2013.

Conducting a census allows you to ensure you gather data across all staff groups, departments and demographic groups, supporting the direction of the Five Year Forward View and measures such as the Workforce Race Equality Standard¹.

The introduction of online or mixed methods (online and paper) of running the NHS Staff Survey has made the adoption of a census or extended sample approach much more cost effective and logistically feasible.

The likely benefits to you as an organisation of adopting an online census approach include:

- Greater staff engagement, with all your staff having the opportunity to give their views rather than them feeling the survey was only conducted with a few staff and doesn't capture their voice
- Increased staff trust in the results because they had the opportunity to participate;
- More detailed analysis will be possible (including looking at differences between directorates and staff groups and looking at the data broken down by protected

¹ The **NHS Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)** seeks to prompt inquiry to better understand why it is that BME staff often receive much poorer treatment than white staff in the workplace and to facilitate the closing of those gaps. We know that for this to happen, data needs to be gathered, as you can't change what you don't know. Hearing from more staff, across all demographic groups will allow you to "drill down" and understand the causes of any differences in your data.

characteristics) which will allow you to target your staff engagement work more effectively;

- Reduced costs of moving from paper to an online survey;
- Easier publicity for your survey if everyone will receive it (rather than having to say “you may have been selected”) and the data will have more organisational credibility.

In order to support this work, the Staff Survey Advisory Group has also agreed a number of actions to support you for this year’s survey:

- We are increasing the minimum sample size to 1,250 staff (from 850) where a census is not possible;
- We are increasing the number of online reminders that can be issued to staff;
- We are learning from those already conducting an online census about steps to support others in adopting this approach;
- We are also speaking with organisations with high response rates to develop case studies and good practice suggestions for maximising response rates (more information is available at www.nhsstaffsurveys.com).

I invite you to speak to your NHS Staff Survey Contractor today about the possibility of adopting a census approach to your staff survey, or email the Co-ordination Centre at StaffSurvey@PickerEurope.ac.uk for further information.

Yours sincerely,



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