



UK health service clarifies policy to deny care to 'homophobic' patients



By [Christine Rousselle](#)

London, England, Feb 19, 2020 / 01:00 pm (CNA).- Britain's National Health Service has clarified a new policy that will allow patients found to be homophobic, racist, and sexist to be denied non-emergency treatment.

Under the new rules, medical professionals can refuse non-emergency care to patients who harass, bully, or discriminate against them. The policy was announced on Feb. 18, and will go into effect in April.

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/uk-health-service-clarifies-policy-to-deny-care-to-homophobic-patients-56586>

Previously, a medical professional was only permitted to deny non-emergency care to verbally aggressive or physically violent patients. The new policy will expand this criteria to include any harassment, including homophobia, sexism, and racism.

The U.K.'s Health Secretary Matt Hancock wrote to NHS staff announcing the change on Tuesday, stating "no act of violence or abuse is minor," and that "being assaulted or abused is not part of the job."

A 2019 survey of NHS staff revealed that more than one in four NHS workers have reported being "bullied, harassed or abused" in the last year. Approximately one in seven NHS workers said they had been physically attacked.

Hancock said that "Far too often I hear stories that the people you are trying to help lash out," and that "I've seen it for myself in [emergency rooms], on night shifts, and on ambulances."

The survey also found that NHS staff who worked in patients in emergency wards, with mental health issues or learning disabilities experienced more abuse and violence than workers at other NHS locations.

CNA asked the NHS to clarify how a patient would be deemed racist or homophobic, and if they could be denied care due to a staff member's perception or inference of their religious beliefs. CNA questioned if someone such as a Catholic priest or Imam could be removed from an NHS trust due to their religious opposition to same-sex marriage and homosexual activity.

An NHS spokesperson told CNA that the policy would only extend to people who made discriminatory comments to a member of the staff while they were receiving treatment.

"A person's personal beliefs or any historical views are entirely irrelevant for this policy – a person would only be refused treatment if they made openly discriminatory remarks to a staff member at that time," a spokesman for NHS England, said to CNA.

Taylor also clarified that certain medical conditions that may impact a person's decision making skills or verbal filter would be considered when making a decision to deny care.

"Things like the patient's mental health, any sort of cognitive impairment will also be taken into account," said the spokesman. "So someone showing obvious signs of dementia would not be refused treatment in this circumstance."