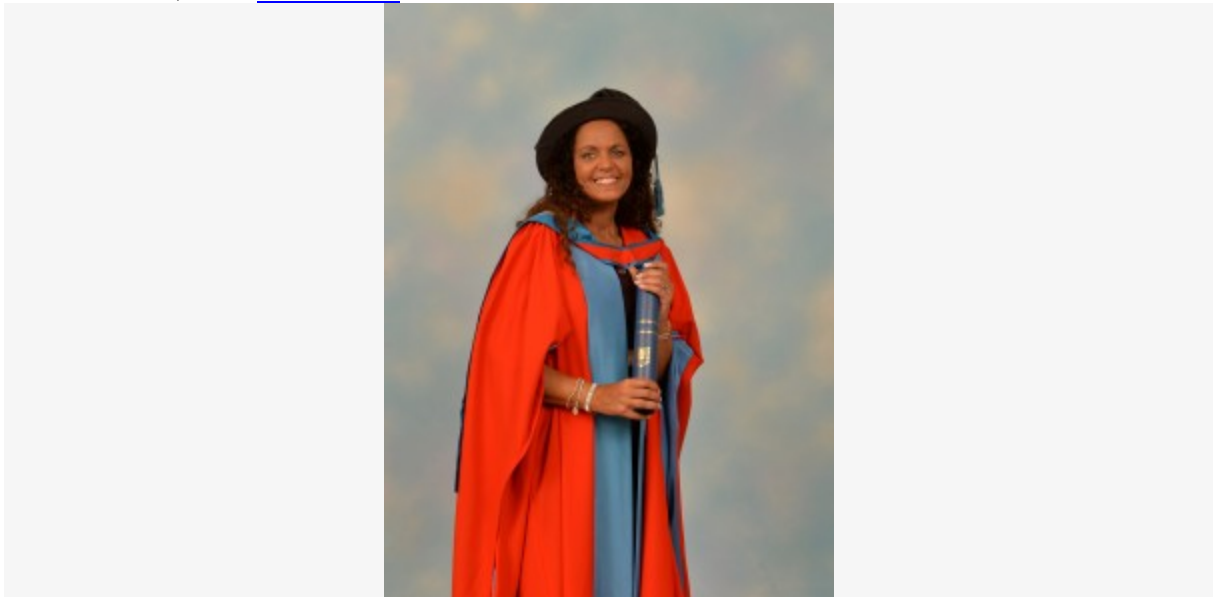


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## CBE celebration for NHS England's National Lead for Equality

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Paula Vasco-Knight Will receive a CBE in new years honours list.

NHS England's National Lead for Equality Dr Paula Vasco-Knight has been honoured with a CBE in the 2014 New Year's Honours List.

Dr Vasco-Knight was given the award for her work across the NHS both as an ambassador for equality and diversity within NHS England and as an innovative Chief Executive.

Having worked as a nurse and inspiring NHS leader for the last 25 years Dr Vasco-Knight became the first BME female Chief Executive of South Devon Healthcare Foundation Trust in 2008 and is now the only female chief executive in the NHS with an African heritage.

The daughter of a Nigerian father and an English mother, Dr Vasco-Knight is proud of her working class roots. She kicked-off her career as a nurse in the 1980s and after working her way up to Executive level took up a role at NHS England in July 2012. From her post she works hard to promote the diversity agenda within the NHS workforce as well as striving to reduce health inequalities for patients.

She said: “I would like to think that an award like this, for a woman from a mixed-race background, demonstrates that anything is possible. It is therefore a tribute to the dedication of my Equality and Health Inequalities colleagues at NHS England and across the NHS, who work with great dedication and commitment to promoting equality for all and to tackling health inequalities.

“I was genuinely delighted and surprised to be honoured in this way. I regard this also as recognition for the work of all 4,000 of my colleagues in South Devon Healthcare, who work tirelessly day in and day out for our local community.”

Since she took up post as Chief Executive Dr Vasco-Knight has helped her Trust scoop six major healthcare awards and she herself was recently named on the Health Service Journal’s [‘Most Inspirational Women in Healthcare’](#) list for 2013.

Professor Sir Malcolm Grant, Chair of NHS England, said: “We are very proud of Dr Vasco-Knight for her achievement. She has done a fantastic job at NHS England representing the needs of all staff and promoting the call for diversity to be further up the NHS agenda across the UK. This honour is testament to the 25 years of hard work Dr Vasco-Knight has given to the NHS and is continuing to give.”

Although people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds make up 18 per cent of the NHS workforce, very few have Board level positions and Dr Vasco-Knight has fought hard to address this imbalance. She passionately promotes NHS England’s message on tackling the issue of diversity and is pushing for it to be on the agenda of every Chief Executive in the country.

She added: “Equality and diversity is a key focus for NHS England and ought to be up there for every Chief Executive. Our population is diverse and our workforce needs to reflect this to offer the best patient care it can. We are committed to making the NHS a leader in staff diversity and are looking forward to a very productive 2014.”

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