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'Toxic culture' - Leading hospitals condemned over 'unacceptable' exclusion of doctor

By Mike Waites

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Bosses at leading hospitals in Yorkshire have been condemned over the “wholly unacceptable” exclusion of their top doctor for more than a year.

Tim Noble has been barred from carrying out duties as medical director at **Doncaster** and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS trust since September 2024.

The British Medical Association (BMA) said he has raised concerns in the public interest about bullying and harassment at the trust.

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It claims he has been “unlawfully excluded” by being prevented from returning to his role.



Dr Tim Noble, who has been suspended from his role as medical director at Doncaster Royal Infirmary for more than a year, flagged up concerns about bullying, harassment and a toxic culture at DRI, his union says. (Photo: DBTHT).

The union said it believed his case reflected a “disturbing pattern” of action by the trust against staff in responding to complaints about poor behaviour.

It has repeated calls for a “toxic culture” to be addressed at the organisation which runs four hospitals in Doncaster and north Nottinghamshire.

Its concerns about the running of the trust and Dr Noble’s exclusion have been raised with regional and national leaders at the regulator **NHS England** which has been urged to intervene.

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The **Yorkshire Post** understands Dr Noble, who took up the post of medical director as the pandemic struck in 2020, faces a formal hearing over his future before Christmas.

It remains unclear what the allegations are against him. Shazia Karim, the BMA’s head of region for Yorkshire and the **North East**, said it was aware of “significant concerns” over a poor culture at the trust.

She said Dr Noble had been “unlawfully excluded” since September last year.

“It is wholly unacceptable for this to happen to a senior doctor who has served the trust for almost 20 years and has raised concerns in the public interest about bullying and harassment,” she said.

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“It reflects a toxic culture within the trust that must be addressed.”

She added: “We believe this case exemplifies a disturbing pattern: when concerns about poor behaviour are raised, the trust responds not with openness, but with disciplinary threats and attempts to silence.”

She said the union was also “deeply concerned” over significant spending of taxpayers’ cash on external human resources consultants and legal firms in dealing with Dr Noble’s case.

“Every member of staff must feel able to make protected disclosures without fear of facing retaliation or any form of detriment,” she added.

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“The BMA are aware of significant concerns across the trust regarding bullying and the loss of experienced and capable senior staff linked to the poor culture in the organisation.

“There is a growing and widespread loss of confidence in the trust’s senior leadership.”

Dr Noble took up a post as consultant respiratory physician in 2006 at the trust where he has held a number of leadership roles. He remains listed as medical director which includes membership of the trust’s board although he is not attending its meetings or performing any duties related to the role.

In a statement, the trust said it took “any allegations of bullying or inappropriate behaviour extremely seriously”.

It added: “It would not be appropriate to comment on any specific individual cases.”