



Supporting
our people

NHS
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Our People Strategy: year one report

2022 – 2023

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Introduction

Dear colleagues,

We're one year into enacting our three-year People Strategy and I've been reflecting on all of the work undertaken to support and develop our staff during this time – much has been achieved! Our People Strategy, published in July 2022, sets out our ambitions for 2022 to 2025. These align to our business goals, strategy, and priorities with the overall aim to drive organisational performance with an engaged, motivated workforce that recognises people for the vital work they do.

In this report, we account for the activities, initiatives and interventions undertaken by the human resources, equality, diversity and inclusion, and learning and knowledge management teams during year one to support our ambitions. I feel very proud that there are some significant achievements to share, recognising this has been a challenging year for people in some respects, with the cost-of-living crisis and pay uncertainties, and industrial action across the NHS and other public sector bodies. Coupled with changes within the organisation and some turnover in the director's team, we have been agile in responding to unplanned demands and rising to the challenge as much as possible. Consequently, a small number of projects have needed to move into year two due to capacity issues.

Looking ahead to the next year, our main areas of focus are set out on the following pages to take us towards achieving our vision for our people ambitions:

'A diverse and inclusive organisation where everyone is supported to be their best, is valued, and is proud to be part of the team.'

'The HRA will become even more inclusive, and attractive for potential employees. We will be known as an organisation that lives its values, where staff are supported and empowered to make their best contributions, and where everyone works together to achieve our strategic aims.'

We hope you enjoy reading this report and are excited to see what we achieve in year two.

Michele Ekins

Head of People

May 2023

The People Strategy

Published in July 2022, our People Strategy sets out our ambitions for the three years ahead. These align to our business goals, strategy, and priorities with the overall intention to drive organisational performance with an engaged, motivated workforce that recognises our people for the vital work they do.

The People Strategy comprises six strategic and complementary themes to support the whole employee life-cycle: people planning, bringing new members of the team into the organisation, building and developing skills, inspirational and compassionate leadership and management at all levels, the key theme of innovation and agility as we look to the future to support our refreshed organisational strategy, wellbeing and reward, recognising the importance of wellbeing in individual and organisational performance, and inclusion and belonging – a theme that very much weaves and embraces all parts of the strategy.



Under each theme, we have developed an ambition, alongside some concrete actions to support the ambition through years one, two, and three. Through this report, we account for the work achieved under year one to support our ambitions. The strategy is intended to be adaptable and for this reason some actions have been moved into year two.

Strategic people planning

Strategic people planning

Forward thinking people planning ensures that people with the right skills, knowledge, capabilities, and capacity are in place at the right time to achieve our business goals and priorities. Our customers and stakeholders recognise the high-quality service we offer.

What we achieved:

- conducted a major review of our recruitment and selection of staff policy and procedure to implement a new, evidence-based policy and procedure supported by facilitated conversations on high quality recruitment and the role of bias
- scoped the transition to NHS Jobs as a replacement to the Trac system to go live in 2023 to 2024
- delivered new reporting structures in Digital to embed digital apprenticeships in their areas of chosen specialism and created a new apprenticeship role in the learning and development team
- discussed people data at the organisation's people group on a quarterly basis, including exit data and feedback through exit questionnaires
- delivered organisational change aligned to the HRA's organisational design principles
- began work to support the strategic workforce planning by creating baseline data to inform future conversations

Our focus for year two:

- in year two, we will develop our strategic workforce plan, working with directorates to ensure a workforce plan that ensures the right people are employed in the right place, at the right level, and with the right skills to deliver on our organisational strategy and business plans
- our transition to NHS Jobs is happening later than we anticipated and we have moved our related work into 2023 to 2024. Surveying new starters on their recruitment experience will give us a baseline to measure success

Building skills and capabilities

Building skills and capabilities

Ensuring our people have the skills and capabilities so that our organisation succeeds and thrives. We're able to give that excellent customer service to our research community to help ensure the best outcomes possible.

What we achieved:

- we delivered webinars throughout the year on a variety of topics such as challenging conversations, communication skills, management and leadership, reliance, and assertiveness
- we have begun an upgrade of our existing e-learning materials and developing several more
- we shared the vision of our learning culture with senior managers in conversations to understand the return on investment and how it can be calculated
- we continue to work with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and colleagues in our Digital directorate to implement a Moodle based learning management system (LMS) for piloting in year two
- we introduced our Stepping Up programme for BAME colleagues in September 2022 which has received positive feedback from all involved. Candidates have transitioned from six months of formal face to face teaching to a period of mentoring
- we continue to collaborate with colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care and NIHR

Our focus for year two:

- further development of content and delivery of a digital library of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes and introduction of CPD into appraisal documentation
- transition to a suitable LMS platform to support a more learner-led approach fostering curiosity and individual responsibility for CPD and career progression



Inspirational leadership

Inspirational leadership

We want our leaders and managers to understand the impact of positive leadership behaviours in influencing a healthy work culture. Our leaders embody compassionate, inclusive and inspirational leadership to enable our people to thrive and succeed at work.

The HRA's ability to accomplish its goals will be met by empowering and equipping our managers and leaders to understand leadership culture, as defined by the collective actions of formal and informal leaders acting together.

What we achieved:

- we created a framework for leadership behaviours for piloting in 2023 to 2024
- we designed, developed, and rolled out our Essential Managers Programme beginning January 2023, supporting colleagues in achieving a formal Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualification
- restructured our learning and development team to introduce a new role of Leadership and Management Delivery Manager to help us take our aspirations further
- through constructive challenge in our recruitment approvals process, ensured that roles appropriate as development opportunities are advertised internally to support career development

Our focus for year two:

- evaluate the pilot modules of the Essential Managers Programme to inform the delivery of the full programme during year two and three
- delivery of the Management Foundations programme
- delivery of the Stepping into Leadership programme
- development of competency values and behaviour frameworks to support 360 feedback and annual appraisal review

Wellbeing and reward

Wellbeing and reward

People are proud to work at the HRA and enjoy their time at work. Staff feel valued, engaged, and supported in their roles and morale is good. Each and every one of us has a sustainable work-life balance. Wellbeing and healthy working practices and initiatives are central to our culture, and we work in an environment where health and wellbeing are actively promoted. Transparent fair pay and reward frameworks contribute to our feeling of wellbeing.

We feel valued and want to excel in the services we give to our customers.

What we achieved:

- appointed a non-executive director as the organisation's wellbeing guardian
- embedded our Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) pilot into a long-term and sustainable arrangement with more trained and more diverse MHFA volunteers
- worked with our Staff Voices to refresh the scope and purpose of the group to enhance the value offer of a key staff engagement group
- published pay transparency guidance so colleagues are informed about how decisions relating to their pay are made

Our focus for year two:

- develop additional guidance on job sharing to embed this as a realistic flexible working option
- critical analysis of our wellbeing provision and staff benefits seeking benchmarking with our arm's length body (ALB) networks and seeking feedback from our workforce
- centralise wellbeing resources into a wellbeing SharePoint site, owned by human resources and regularly updated
- update and refresh our mental health framework to ensure ongoing fitness for purpose
- source appropriate value adding learning sessions from outreach programmes and partners
- increase publicity of our networks through regular publication of blogs

Innovation and agility

Innovation and agility

We adapt to do things differently and do different things to produce effective and sustainable outcomes for the evolving needs of our customers and the organisation. Our staff feel empowered to put forward ideas and solutions to enable us to adapt at pace as circumstances change. Digital solutions support us to transform and innovate on our processes.

We value diversity of thought and experience. Our people are curious, collaborative, and inclusive in developing new ways of working. Our teams are resilient, flexible, agile, high-performing and customer focused.

What we achieved:

- expanded our directors' performance assessment criteria to include leading innovation and change
- met as a forming organisational development team to begin to scope innovation work
- maintained active participation in ALB networks to ensure the HRA is never left behind and we continue to benchmark our approaches against those of others

Our focus for year two:

- revise people group terms of reference to include innovation as a standing agenda item
- include an overarching organisational objective of innovation and change in appraisal scheme for all staff
- scope and set up an idea and innovation hive to encourage and capture our people's ideas for innovation and change

Inclusion and belonging

Inclusion and belonging

We want our people to feel able to bring their authentic self to work, knowing their unique perspective and experiences are valued as essential to the organisation, and are part of our shared organisational identity.

Having a diverse and engaged workforce will mean we better understand the needs of our stakeholders and communities we represent and help us achieve our mission to protect and promote the interests of patients and the public in health and social care research.

What we achieved:

- created supplementary guidance and delivered training to support our refreshed recruitment and selection policy and procedure
- developed reaching out guidance to map out the routes through which colleagues can reach out when things go wrong and what they can expect to happen when they do
- centralised our dignity and respect, workplace resolution, and freedom to speak up policies into a reaching out suite of HR policies
- commissioned a video to set out our respect principles
- delivered 'Let's talk' sessions on a range of topics such as mental health, Pride, bisexuality, menopause, and neurodiversity
- embedded Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion considerations into our policy and project design through updated equalities impact assessment forms
- held a development day for our staff led interest groups (SIGs) and established bi-monthly peer support meetings

Our focus for year two:

- deliver an enhanced Stepping Up programme by implementing feedback gained from the pilot cohort
- develop and deliver inclusive leadership capabilities
- develop and agree our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities for 2023 and 2024