The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn
NHS Foundation Trust

Committee Annual Report

Annual Report of:	People Committee
Annual Report Period:	April 2020 – March 2021
Chair:	Simon Roberts, Non-Executive Director
Report to:	Board of Directors (in Public)
Date:	4 May 2021

1 CHAIR'S SUMMARY

2020/'21 has posed unprecedented challenges for Team QEH. Yet despite this, considerable progress has been made towards improving assurances in key areas that are subject to scrutiny by the People Committee. Launch of the corporate strategy presented the Committee with two clear people-centric strategic objectives focusing on improving staff engagement and wellbeing and considerable progress has already been made in the implementation of both the staff engagement and culture transformation programme. The People Committee looks forward to continued progress in these areas during 2021/'22.

Willingness for staff to speak up is central to the cultural values that the organisation espouses and good progress has been made over the past year. The Committee looks forward to continued progress during the coming year, including addressing the areas highlighted in the partial assurance internal audit report.

Medical job planning has proven to be an extremely challenging area however following a concerted effort, significant progress has been made over the course of the year and we look forward to this continuing as we now enter into the '21/'22 job planning round. And although staff stories and Divisional presentations were appropriately paused during the heightened operational pressures that this past year has brought, we look forward to these being reinstated during 2021/'22.

With regards to the core workforce metrics, the Committee has reflected much due credit for addressing and reducing vacancy rates, notably in nursing following the successful international recruitment programme, though challenges remain in some areas. However, it is with the core workforce metrics that considerable concerns remain. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, underlying levels of staff sickness are still too high and the 4% target has not been met during 2020/21. Similarly challenges still exist around compliance against appraisals and mandatory training and following a

root cause analysis requested by the Committee, these areas need to be addressed as a priority during the coming months. Providing staff with an annual appraisal is an absolute right and is fully consistent with an organisational culture that respects and values staff. At the same time, there is a need to review the manner in which key workforce data is reported such that the People Committee and indeed Board and other sub-committees receive the same data in a clear and consistent manner. A full review and refresh of the reporting format of the workforce report will greatly assist in this regard.

Finally, the Committee has welcomed scrutiny of its own effectiveness as part of QEH's "Committee Effectiveness Review" and looks forward to the implementation of the recommendations made.

2 PURPOSE OF COMMITTEE

The People Committee is constituted as a standing committee of the Board of Directors with delegated responsibility in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

The People Committee agenda is aligned with the Board Assurance Framework and Corporate Strategy and, as a committee of the Board of Directors, independently reviews, monitors and reports to the Board on workforce KPIs, human resources management, key risks and medical and non-clinical staffing via the Chair's Assurance Reports.

The Committee meets monthly and provides assurance on:

- An overarching strategy for People, Workforce Activity and planning
- Staff Experience and Engagement in alignment with the Trust's strategic plans
- Recruitment and retention strategy
- Culture and organisational development strategy
- Leadership, training and development within the hospital
- Scrutiny of the risks and controls which affect all aspects of the organisation's business.

Key areas of business:

1. Strategic

- The Trust's People Plan – review of development and delivery
- Workforce redesign initiatives – alignment with strategic plan of the Trust
- Workforce planning – priorities that arise from annual business planning.

2. Oversight

- Statutory workforce reporting relating to nursing/skills mix, medical and non-clinical staffing issues
- Regular reporting on leadership development, workforce planning, policy development

- Recruitment and retention, staff engagement, experience and organisational culture
- Feedback on staff surveys undertaken throughout the year and wider mechanisms of staff feedback, including Freedom to Speak Up
- Reviewing the main People key performance indicators – including sickness absence, mandatory training and appraisals
- Risk management and mitigations
- Monitoring effectiveness of controls and sources of assurance in respect of workforce-related risk identified on the Board Assurance Framework and corporate Risk Register
- Workforce policy and regulation
- Staff health and wellbeing
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and compliance with relevant duties and legislation.

3 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS / ASSURANCES

Corporate Strategy launch (new People Strategic Objectives)

There are two main People Strategic Objectives, notably:

- SO3 – Strengthening staff engagement to create an open culture with Trust at the centre (Deputy CEO: Executive Lead)

- SO6 – Maximising opportunities for our staff to achieve their true potential so that we deliver outstanding care (Director of Human Resources: Executive Lead)

Clear KPIs for year one (2020/21) have been approved by the Board and are monitored quarterly at People Committee meetings.

New People Plan 2020/21

The Committee has approved an underpinning People Plan which brings together, in one document, the local, regional and national people priorities. Performance against this single set of KPIs is consistent with the high-level Corporate Strategy KPIs and is monitored quarterly by the People Committee.

Culture and staff engagement programme

The Trust wants to create a welcoming culture at QEH where patients are always put first and where staff feel valued and are comfortable speaking up, knowing they will be listened to and where kindness is normal. The Trust has developed a programme of work, with appropriate resource, to support delivery of this priority.

The Trust has recruited a substantive Head of Staff Engagement and Head of Organisational Culture to support the delivery of the Trust's Culture Transformation Programme and Staff Engagement Programme which is beginning to make a positive difference to what it feels like to work at QEH. This is evidenced by the improved 2019 and 2020 national staff survey results, with QEH improving in all 10 themes for the second successive year in 2020 and being the 12th most improved Trust in the country.

The Trust's latest Medical Engagement Survey scores (2020 survey and published 2021) were much improved and one of the best in the East of England. Feedback from the CQC (2020 inspection) demonstrated that staff feel more engaged and culture is improving as did the external stakeholder perception survey that the Trust carried out in 2020 to assess how it is perceived by key stakeholders and partners. There remains a strong focus on values, behaviours and kindness across the organisation and the Committee received monthly assurance in 2020/21 that there is a robust plan in place that is getting the necessary traction and results, such that reporting progress for the culture transformation programme and staff engagement programme will become quarterly in 2021/22 so that progress against the clear programmes of work in place for the year can be monitored. There have been positive developments to strengthen reward and recognition of staff, with the introduction of long service and Team QEH Awards and more evidence of sharing learning across the organisation, including via dedicated events.

There are three clear mechanisms for capturing staff feedback:

(1) Staff feedback pods allowing for real-time feedback to be received and acted on locally
(2) Quarterly themed pulse surveys
(3) Annual national staff survey

This will be supplemented by a culture perception survey and safety culture survey going into 2021/22 so that there is a set of 'culture indicators' for QEH and so that feedback can be triangulated.

Staff stories

Each meeting (with the exception of during the COVID-19 pandemic due to operational pressures) commences with a staff story so that Committee members can hear what is going well, where we can make improvements and share learning across the organisation. Staff stories over the past year have included hearing from our International Nurses, Neonatal Intensive Care Team, PPE Safety Officers, Freedom to Speak Up Champions and BAME staff and this has enabled a wide range of staff to share their experiences and ensure there is a connection from Board to ward.

Freedom to Speak Up

Much progress has been made to create a culture where staff feel able to speak up, knowing concerns will be acted upon and listened to, though a recent pulse survey which showed there remains more work to do. Numbers of speak up referrals have more than doubled in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20, showing that the Trust is creating a speak up culture.

There are 19 new Freedom to Speak Up Champions, a single Speaking Up Policy launched, and channels have opened up to enable staff to speak up and communicate

clearly and consistently across the organisation. Two new staff networks; BAME and LGBT Staff Networks were launched in-year.

Lots of really positive work has taken place in 2020/21, including a monthly meeting with Freedom to Speak Up Champions, Chaired by the Deputy CEO as the Executive Lead for Speak Up and attended by the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, to discuss themes, speak up culture and the workplan to support improvements in this important area. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian post is supported by a Non-Executive Director. The Freedom to Speak Up Guardian has reported to the People Committee and the Board in 2020/21, and reports quarterly to the National Guardian's Office. Quarterly meetings were introduced in 2020/21, which are attended by the CEO, Deputy CEO, Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, Non-Executive Director Lead, Chief Nurse and Director of HR, to discuss themes and trends arising from Speak Up referrals and to triangulate this data with other important staff experience measures.

An internal audit returned as 'partial assurance' in 2020 for Speak Up, which was as expected. Priorities from this audit include further simplifying the recently-merged Whistleblowing and Freedom to Speak Up Policies, drawing on best practice from across the NHS, formally recording detriment experienced by staff who Speak Up and further raising awareness among specific staff groups of the range of opportunities to speak up. All Whistleblowing and Freedom to Speak Up cases are reported to the Board. This work remains a key focus going into 2021/22, with our latest National Staff Survey results indicating we have more to do. Speak Up remains a priority in our 2021/22 Staff Engagement programme and is central to our Trust-wide culture programme, which has a specific workstream on 'speaking up safely' and equipping staff with the skills to do so and have the right conversations. Another priority looking to 2021/22 includes succession planning for the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, who is due to step down in September 2021, and transferring the operational management of the Speak Up agenda to the Trust's substantive Head of Organisational Culture.

- **Health and wellbeing programme**

The Trust has developed an impressive Health and Wellbeing Programme for staff during 2020, strengthened even further as a result of COVID-19. The programme has received national recognition. QEH has recruited two dedicated clinical psychology and PTSD posts to maximise emotional wellness support for our staff. 20 new mental health first aiders have been appointed and menopause awareness for staff and leaders has been introduced, which has been well-received.

- **Investing in our people**

The Trust has invested in leadership development training for Bands 5, 6 and 7 staff across the organisation and Quality, Service Improvement and Redesign training to the wider organisation. Though impacted by the pandemic, online sessions have continued as appropriate. Clinical Director training commenced in-year and QEH was named the regional hub for the East by the Institute of Healthcare Management (Band 5 and 6 training).

- **Nurse recruitment**

The Trust recorded one of the lowest nurse vacancy rates on record in the country at the end of 2019; 5%, against a target of 4.3%. This is also a record for QEH and followed a successful recruitment campaign which focused on positioning West Norfolk as a great place to live and work (best of work, best of life). The Overall vacancy rate reduced from 14.77% to 10.69% by early 2020 and our time to recruit has reduced by a third, from over 100 days to 62.5 days. There was successful recruitment to additional posts including QEH Fellows, 10 Physicians' Associates and 36 Trainee Nursing Associates.

4 CHALLENGES IN THE PERIOD

Occupational Health Service

The Occupational Health department has experienced an unprecedented demand this year resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. It has also suffered from reduced numbers of nursing staff, due to sickness and maternity leave, as well as managerial and leadership challenges. This has left the department with a backlog of work mid 2020 but, a recovery plan was implemented to improve performance in year and the longer-term solution is a new Integrated Staff Wellness Service which will be in place by quarter four of 2021/22. This will involve a new tender to ensure the staff wellness service is fit for purpose moving forward.

Medical Job planning

Medical staff are obliged to have a valid, up-to-date job plan in place as part of their contract of employment however compliance in this area has historically been a challenge at QEH. As a consequence, this is an area the Committee has paid very close attention to over the past 12-18 months. During Summer 2020, following months of continued concern, the Committee received clarification from the deputy medical director that there was a now a process in place with appropriate resource, in order to make tangible progress.

Despite this, a number of interim deadlines proved very challenging, however by March 2021, the Committee were able to reflect on considerable and significant progress such that with the exception of the small number (8) that would progress to mediation, that all job plans will be signed off by year-end. This was recognised as a tremendous effort by all involved and the Committee looks forward to learnings being applied such that the 2021/'22 job planning round can be completed in a more timely manner.

The Committee recognised that this progress is further evidence of the cultural shift in the organisation. The Committee recognised that this hasn't been an easy journey, and challenged the trajectory for the coming year, also asking that evidence of learning from the process this year will be applied in 2021/22.

Workforce Metrics

As stated in the Chair's summary section, some improvements have been seen in core workforce metrics, eg reducing vacancy rates, notably in nursing following the successful international recruitment programme. However, it is with the core workforce metrics that considerable concerns remain. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, underlying levels of staff sickness are still too high and the 4% target has not been met during 2020/'21. Similarly challenges still exist around compliance against appraisals and mandatory training and following a root cause analysis requested by the Committee, these areas need to be addressed as a priority during the coming months. Providing staff with an annual appraisal is absolute right and is fully consistent with an organisational culture that respects and values staff. At the same time, there is a need to review the manner in which key workforce data is reported such that the People Committee and indeed Board and other sub-committees receive the same data in a clear and consistent manner. A full review and refresh of the reporting format of the workforce report will greatly assist in this regard.

5 BUSINESS CASES CONSIDERED

Business Case	Decision	Date
None		

Proposals for financial support (charitable funds) for supporting delivery of the 2021/22 Staff Engagement Programme were shared at the People Committee before being discussed and agreed at the Charitable Fund Committee.

6 POLICIES/PROCEDURES RATIFIED IN THE PERIOD

Policy	Date ratified
Conflicts of Interest (including gifts, hospitality and sponsorship)	18 November 2020

A Policy Review Group has been set up to review out of date HR policies and to ensure improvements in this area. This group reports into the new People Executive Group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the work on policy updates was paused and this has now recommenced with a clear schedule of policy updates. There are currently 38 policies overdue.

7 NEW LEGISLATION, GUIDANCE & STANDARDS IN THE PERIOD

EU Exit – Workforce Impacts

There are 352 staff (260 substantive and 92 temporary) EU nationals working at the Trust, which equates to 8.23% of the overall workforce. As part of the Brexit agreement, from 31 December 2020, EU citizens no longer have the right to live and work in the UK, although there is a right to work grace period from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2021. Evidence of right to work for EU nationals becomes a requirement from 1 July 2021. Application deadline for EU settlement scheme is 30 June 2021.

Contingency planning is in place to ensure there is no service disruption and that plans are in place. Monthly updates will return to the People Committee in the short-term, given the level of concern, to ensure that there is line of sight from the Committee.

To support the Trust's response to the COVID-19 pandemic a number of measures were put into place to support staff. The Trust followed national guidance at all times.

This included the following:

- support for the risk assessment process,
- fast track recruitment processes
- pausing of mandatory training with the exception of four courses
- redeployment of staff
- training requirements
- mental health and wellbeing support
- health and safety procedures and processes
- absence management arrangements
- changes to terms and conditions

8 COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW AND SELF ASSESSMENT AGAINST TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee undertook an effectiveness review during February and March 2021 and reviewed the outcomes from this process and Terms of Reference at the Committee's meeting in April 2021.

Committee Effectiveness Review

Actions to be taken forward in response to the review include:

- Providing new Committee members with an appropriate induction
    - providing an induction pack and an opportunity to meet the Committee Chair and lead Executive Director(s) for the Committee

- Continuing work to improve the quality of papers and presentations received by the Committee
    - clarification of expectations for report writers
    - presenters briefed by the Deputy CEO prior to the meeting

- Attendance of relevant officers to enable the Committee to understand the reports and information it receives
    - – deputies and subject matter leads will be invited to Committee meetings to present reports

- Relevant sub-groups to provide timely and clear information to the Committee
    - People Executive Group Chair's Assurance Reports will be presented to the People Committee

Terms of Reference

The Committee has well-established Terms of Reference, which are reviewed and updated annually.

	Compliant Y / N	Commentary and action plan where non-compliant
Key responsibilities	Y	The Committee has reviewed the key responsibilities to refresh these to reflect the 2021/22 agenda
Accountability and relationships	Y	
Membership and attendance	Y	Executive membership and deputy attendance for 2021/22 has been revised
Quorum	Y	
Frequency of meetings	Y	The Committee met every month with the exception of December, when core workforce metrics were circulated
Rules	Y	There has been increased effort to ensure that agendas and papers are issued in line with requirements
Reporting	Y	Chair's Assurance Reports from each Committee meeting have been provided to the Board

Proposed adjustments to the Terms of Reference for the year ahead will be put to the Board for consideration and approval.

COVID-19 Pandemic – adjustments to governance arrangements

In March 2020, the Board made adjustments to its governance arrangements around the Trust's Board, Committees and Governors' Council / Committees to ensure the Trust responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in a way which was proportionate to the circumstances. The measures sought to maintain effective corporate governance arrangements, while adhering to national guidance about social distancing, and recognising the operational pressures being experienced by the Trust's executive, clinical and operational teams.

From March 2020 – June 2020, all People Committee meetings continued to take place as scheduled but meeting virtually, for a shorter duration (1 hour) and with fewer executive director colleagues in attendance. This enabled continuation of priority Committee business and supported a smooth return to business as usual in June with the extension of meetings to 2 hours.

From January 2021 – March 2021, with the second national lockdown and significant operational pressures on the Trust, meetings were again reviewed with the aim of reducing business to 1 hour where possible, with reduced attendance from staff. Divisional presentations were cancelled during this period to minimise the requirements on staff to prepare for and attend meetings.

9 MEMBERSHIP ATTENDANCE

The Committee consists of three Non-Executive Directors (including the Chair) and two Executive Directors and has met on eleven occasions between April 2020 and March 2021. The Committee has discharged its responsibilities for providing assurance to the Board in respect of the Trust's governance systems and processes.

Simon Roberts, Non-Executive Director (NED), has chaired People Committee since August 2019. He is a highly experienced business leader and adviser and has held executive leadership positions in the NHS and private healthcare markets.
The core membership of the People Committee for the period is:

Members
Chair (NED)
Two additional NEDs
Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Executive Lead for
Organisational Development and Staff Engagement)
Director of Human Resources
Chief Nurse
Director of Finance

The Committee meetings between April 2020 and March 2021 have been attended, as appropriate, by the Chief Executive and the Deputy Medical Director and subs for the Chief Nurse and Director of Finance. Other officers have attended by invitation, where appropriate, for relevant agenda items. The Committee has received administrative support from the Corporate Office.

Member's Name / Title	Attendance
MEMBERSHIP:	
Simon Roberts (Chair)	11/11
David Dickinson (NED)	11/11
Alan Brown (NED)	10/11
Laura Skaife-Knight (Deputy CEO)	11/11
Jo Humphries (Director of People)	1/1
Cath Castleton (Director of HR)	11/11 (Sub attended 5/11)
Libby McManus (Chief Nurse)*	2/4 (Sub attended 2/4)
April Brown (Chief Nurse) *	4/6 (sub attended 4/6)
Chris Benham (Director of Finance)*	7/11 (Sub attended 5/11)
CORE ATTENDEES:	
Caroline Shaw (Chief Executive Officer)	8/11
Dr R Govindan (Deputy Medical Director)	8/11
Andrea Prime (Trust Secretary)	3/11

Attendance includes representation by a deputy
Shaded boxes indicate staff member no longer in post
**Agreed reduced attendance during COVID-19*

10 OUTSTANDING ASSURANCE GAPS / RISKS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD

Performance against key metrics – including appraisal, sickness and mandatory training

As the Trust has responded to and come out of the first phase of COVID-19, the Committee has not gained sufficient assurance from the trajectories and recovery plans for the main People KPIs. This remains a cause for concern for the Committee, with a focus on this area in the Divisional presentations at the Committee and in the workforce Integrated Performance Report and a root cause analysis underway to ensure the systemic challenges with this indicators are appropriately addressed in 2021/22 as a priority for this Committee and the incoming Director of People who joined the Trust in March 2021.

Data and reporting

The Committee has had ongoing concerns regarding consistently of workforce data and definitions in workforce reports. Work is underway to ensure consistency and accuracy of reporting with a new-style report for the Workforce Integrated Performance Report being introduced in April 2021, which will address these concerns, following input from the Information Team.

11 CONCLUSION

Staff across QEH have responded admirably to the COVID-19 pandemic, with so many going above and beyond during a challenging year to deliver safe and compassionate care to our patients and their families. Notwithstanding this difficult year, much progress has been made against the People priorities in 2020/21, which QEH can be proud of, including the development of a People Plan which launched several months after the new Corporate Strategy.

As we enter Year 2 of our Corporate Strategy, the People priorities are clear, not least the People Recovery Plan, which has a clear focus on staff health and wellbeing, as we move beyond wave 2 of the pandemic, as well as improved performance for mandatory training, sickness absence and appraisals.