

ASSURANCE REPORT

NHS WALES SHARED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Reporting Committee	Shared Service Partnership Committee
Chaired by	Tracy Myhill, NWSSP Chair
Lead Executive	Neil Frow, Managing Director, NWSSP
Author and contact details.	Peter Stephenson, Head of Finance and Business Development
Date of meeting	24 March 2022
Summary of key matters including achievements and progress considered by the Committee and any related decisions made.	
<u>Recruitment Modernisation Programme</u>	
<p>The Director of People and Organisational Development and the Deputy Director of Employment Services gave a detailed presentation of the work being undertaken in Recruitment to support the significant increase in activity since the start of the pandemic. Looking back to when NWSSP was first established in 2011, significant progress has been made in streamlining the recruitment process, demonstrated by a reduction in the average time-to-hire from 132 to 71 days. New services have been taken on and the Welsh Language functionality has been enhanced. Last summer, further initiatives were progressed relating to the Workforce Directors' Responsiveness Programme including enhancements to TRAC, development of the applicant web page, and maintaining virtual pre-employment checks.</p> <p>During late summer 2021, the service was faced with unprecedented and unplanned levels of recruitment across NHS Wales due to the Covid response, resulting in the usual high level of compliance with KPI targets not being sustained. This led to the need to review the way in which recruitment is undertaken in Wales and where applicable modernise the service further through changes to processes, technology, and education.</p> <p>The Deputy Director provided details of specific initiatives under each of the headings of process, technology, and education. One key technological initiative is investment in pre-employment check software that enables identification documents to be held in ESR and viewed via the ESR app. This has been promoted by the Home Office, however the technology is not currently available, but it will be fundamental to virtual pre-employment checks continuing after the current proposed Home Office end-date of September 2022. Due to the short notice provided by the Home Office over this software, funding to purchase it still needs to be confirmed.</p>	

The Modernisation Action Plan is to be taken to the All-Wales Workforce and OD peer group meeting in early April, with a formal update to the May Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

Chair's Report

The Chair updated the Committee on the activities that she had been involved with since the January meeting. This included chairing her first Welsh Risk Pool Committee which had been very informative; attending the Hywel Dda Sustainability Committee; and also attending the NHS Wales Chairs' meeting which allowed her to keep updated on the latest developments and issues. Going forward there will be a number of attendances at board meetings, starting with Digital Health Care Wales and then Health Education and Improvement Wales. The Chair is keen that these are not used solely for NWSSP to update on performance, but to elicit a two-way exchange of ideas and information.

Managing Director Update

The Managing Director presented his report, which included the following updates on key issues:

- The IMTP has now been formally submitted to Welsh Government for their consideration;
- As part of a UK-wide response to the war in Ukraine, Welsh Government asked NWSSP to identify any surplus equipment and consumables that could be donated to Ukraine. Review of current stocks identified items to the value of £524k that could be donated as they are surplus to current requirements (PPE, ventilators, and medical consumables). Thus far, over £131k of surplus items has already been sent to Ukraine from NWSSP;
- The purchase of Matrix House in Swansea was completed by the end of March. The building is currently 75% occupied by NHS Wales, with Public Health Wales and the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust as tenants in addition to NWSSP. Acquisition of this asset will lead to a reduction in future revenue costs to NHS Wales and the opportunity to create a wider public sector hub at some point; and
- The Minister for Health and Social Care visited our Imperial Park 5 Warehouse on 17th March, providing an opportunity to demonstrate to her the extensive range of services that now operate from this facility.

Items Requiring SSPC Approval/Endorsement

Lease Car Salary Sacrifice

In July 2021, the Committee agreed to reduce the CO2 emissions for Salary Sacrifice vehicles through the NHS Fleet scheme. Whilst the intentions of this decision were well founded, the implementation of the first phase from 120g/km to 100g/km has generated the following issues:

- Those staff who do not have driveways and therefore home charging facilities, are either unable to participate in the scheme or have a very limited choice of cars;
- Only certain EV and hybrid cars meet the lower CO2 limits – therefore a large number of small fuel-efficient cars e.g. 1 litre VW Polo, Ford Ka etc are no longer available to staff. This is particularly problematic to those staff who live in the more rural areas

In view of the above it is evident that some staff are opting not to apply for salary sacrifice cars but instead are continuing to use their private cars, commonly referred to as the 'grey fleet'. These cars are generally older and emit more pollution than the vehicles that were previously available on the lease car salary sacrifice scheme.

In view of this, it was proposed to reinstate the 120g/km cap for petrol and hybrid vehicles from 1st April 2022 but not to allow diesel vehicles to be ordered. The impact of this will be to increase the range of vehicles available, remove new diesel vehicles from the Scheme and provide greater access to those staff who do not possess home charging facilities.

It was also noted that NWSSP do not administer this Service to all Health Boards and Trusts, and it was agreed that the provision of the administration of service to an all-Wales service should be explored

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed:

- Adjustment in the CO2 emissions;
- Removal of the ability to order new diesel cars on the scheme

Items For Noting

Energy Update

The Committee received a paper relating to the current situation with energy prices. Due to the nature of the markets and high expenditure, the Energy Price Risk Management Group (EPRMG) was formed in 2005 to manage exposure to risk across the NHS Wales energy contracts. The overarching aim of the group is to minimise the impact of energy price rises through proactive management and forward buying.

There have been very significant increases in gas and electricity prices during the year, particularly during recent weeks following the outbreak of the Ukraine war. The EPRMG strategy of purchasing ahead has meant that NHS Wales has benefitted substantially and avoided most of the price increases for gas and electric supply. Whilst this strategy has protected NHS Wales from the huge increase in market prices for 2021/22 it is likely that there will be very significant hikes in energy costs in 2022/23 because of the current contracts coming to an end.

The recent increase in energy costs is very unwelcome, but is unavoidable given the current war in Ukraine, the sanctions applied to Russia and the removal of Russian Gas and Oil from supplying the global market. However, the EPMRG will attempt to manage the energy costs for NHS Wales as best as we can over the year ahead.

The Committee **NOTED** the paper.

Finance, Performance, People, Programme and Governance Updates

Finance – The Director of Finance & Corporate Services reported that NWSSP was on track to meet each of its revenue financial targets for 2021/22 and the projected outturn on the Welsh Risk Pool was in line with the Integrated Medium-Term Plan. Additional capital funding had been received in quarters three and four, but plans were in place to ensure the funding was fully utilised by the end of the financial year.

Performance – Most KPIs are on track except for those relating to Recruitment Services which was the subject of the deep dive earlier in the agenda. The move towards qualitative output focused measures continues within NWSSP.

People & OD Update – Sickness absence rates remain at very low levels with an absence rate of 2.93% for the last quarter. Performance and Development Reviews and Statutory and Mandatory training results continue to improve although there is still room for further improvement. Headcount is increasing due mainly to the additional staff recruited as part of the Single Lead Employer Scheme. The ESR database has been modified such that most of the facilities it provides can be accessed and delivered in Welsh

Corporate Risk Register – there are two red risks. The first relates to the pressures currently being noted within the Employment Services Directorate, and particularly in Recruitment and Payroll Services, which was the subject of the earlier deep dive. The second refers to the energy price increases which again was the subject of an earlier agenda item.

Papers for Information

The following items were provided for information only:

- PMO Highlight Report
- Audit Committee Highlight Report
- Quality and Safety Assurance Report
- 2022/23 Forward Plan
- Finance Monitoring Returns (Months 10 and 11)

AOB

N/a

Matters requiring Board/Committee level consideration and/or approval

- The Board is asked to **NOTE** the work of the Shared Services Partnership Committee.

Matters referred to other Committees	
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N/A	
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Date of next meeting	19 May 2022
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