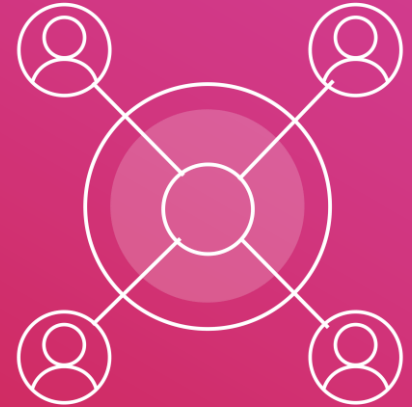




HFMA briefing
July 2020



Summary of *We are the NHS: people plan 2020/21 – action for us all*



*We are the NHS: people plan 2020/21 – action for us all*¹ (people plan) builds on the *Interim NHS people plan*² (interim plan) published in June 2019. It recognises the progress already made on the objectives in the interim plan and acknowledges the acceleration due to Covid-19. In the absence of a comprehensive spending review from the government, the people plan is unable to set out a full five-year strategy as intended. Instead, the people plan takes the opportunity to consider the learning from the pandemic and consolidate good practice as the NHS develops new ways of working.

This briefing summarises the main points. However, the people plan is an interactive document with links to several case studies and should be consulted for further detail.

Responding to new challenges and opportunities

Covid-19 has created new challenges for the NHS workforce; the people plan sets out a number of these and highlights the opportunities that these present.

¹ NHS, *We are the NHS: people plan 2020/21 – action for us all*, July 2020

² NHS, *Interim NHS people plan*, June 2019

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The wellbeing of NHS staff has come to the forefront during the pandemic, with organisations providing increased psychological support for their workforce. The people plan states that flexible and remote working have also had a positive impact on work-life balance for many, with an increase in productivity due to better attendance at virtual meetings and less time spent travelling.

Rapid digital transformation has also changed the way that staff interact with patients with video consultations now being widely used. In addition, many clinicians have returned to the NHS and the people plan considers how this can be built upon.

The people plan states that the simplification of governance processes has empowered staff to make decisions and implement changes. System working and local partnerships have also improved. However, the pandemic has also highlighted existing inequalities and the people plan looks at how this can be addressed.

There have been dramatic changes across the NHS and the people plan recognises that not all changes will have been beneficial, but there is learning to take from all of them. Metrics will be developed to accompany the people plan to monitor what works. These will be available at the end of September 2020.

Looking after our people

Our NHS people promise

The people plan sets out the NHS people promise:

- we are a team
- we work flexibly
- we are always learning
- we are safe and healthy
- we each have a voice that counts
- we are recognised and rewarded
- we are compassionate and inclusive

It is recognised within the people plan that the workforce is tired and in need of rest and recuperation. The NHS people promise has been developed to improve the experience of working in the NHS and to support people to ask for, and receive, help when they need it. The people plan sets out a number of support offers already available to staff such as free access to mental health and wellbeing apps, bereavement support, and coaching and mentoring support. The annual NHS staff survey will be redesigned from 2021 to align with the people promise.

Keeping staff safe and healthy

The people plan recognises that it is vital to keep NHS staff safe and healthy. As a consequence, employers are expected to focus on improved infection control measures; the provision of personal protective equipment; giving support to home working; encouraging the uptake of the flu vaccination; carrying out risk assessments for vulnerable staff; and ensuring that staff take sufficient breaks and leave. In addition, work is expected to continue on addressing bullying and harassment plus violence against NHS staff.

To support this work, the people plan expects all organisations to have a wellbeing guardian to act as a critical friend. The people plan suggests that this could be at non-executive director level. While staff should be encouraged to cycle to work or use means other than cars, the people plan states that free car parking should continue to be provided for staff for the duration of the pandemic. Employers are also expected to ensure that the workplace offers the opportunity to be physically active as well as providing spaces for rest and recuperation to process the physical and psychological demands of the work.

We work flexibly

From September 2020, the people plan states that all staff should have a health and wellbeing conversation at least annually, possibly as part of the appraisal process. Line managers will be expected to discuss flexible working; equality, diversity, and inclusion; as well as the individual's health and wellbeing requirements.

Covid-19 has demonstrated that flexible working practices are possible in the NHS and the people plan seeks to build on these. It states that 56,000 left the NHS between 2011 and 2018 due to work-life balance issues; more flexibility could address some of these issues.

The people plan therefore encourages employers to be more open to all roles being flexible and guidance will be developed for employers to support this. Flexibility should be offered where possible, regardless of role, team, grade, or organisation; it should not need to be justified. The people plan expects this approach to be modelled from the top with board members giving their support to the flexible working. There is also a need to offer more certainty of working patterns and e-rostering systems should continue to be rolled out to enable advance planning.

The flexibility of approach will also be applied to primary care and to training of junior doctors. The people plan also expects this to support staff with caring responsibilities.

Belonging in the NHS

The NHS will be open and inclusive

The people plan recognises the need for action to create a culture where everyone feels that they belong, particularly improving the experience of people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. The people plan sets out a number of programmes that are working to address inequalities in the workforce due to race or disability.

It is expected that employers will overhaul recruitment and promotion practices to ensure that their staffing reflects the diversity of the population that they serve. The people plan highlights that this also includes diversity in leadership plus a need to tackle the disciplinary gap. By December 2021, all NHS organisations should have reviewed their governance arrangements to allow staff networks to contribute to decision making processes. In addition, the Care Quality Commission will place increasing emphasis on progress on equality, diversity, and inclusion in the 'well led' assessment.

Ensuring staff have a voice

The people plan highlights the need to listen to staff and give people the confidence to speak up. A number of surveys are taking place over the coming months to understand staff experience, in addition to using networks and digital spaces to hear from staff.

Compassionate and inclusive leadership

Covid-19 empowered people to take decisions and demonstrate leadership regardless of role or grade. The people plan recognises that this distributed and more inclusive leadership model should be built on and developed. A new NHS leadership compact will be published shortly, and by March 2021, a new NHS leadership observatory will be launched to share best practice and offer practical support for NHS leaders. In the meantime, the people plan states that work will continue on leadership development, promoting clinical leadership and talent management. In addition, free online training material will be made available for line managers and all central NHS leadership programmes will be available online by April 2021.

New ways of working and delivering care

New ways of working have evolved rapidly during Covid-19 with swift decision making and less bureaucracy allowing people to do what was needed. Collaborative working across sectors and with

social care also improved as organisational boundaries were less rigid. The people plan seeks to build on this to transform teams and systems, to improve care for patients.

Making the most of the skills in our teams

The people plan acknowledges the importance of multi-professional teams and the value in upskilling staff to take on different roles when necessary. It is expected that employers will continue to upskill staff and create more flexibility, as well as improving morale and enabling career progression.

Health Education England has developed a number of e-learning resources to support new ways of working. They are also supporting more generalist training for doctors and the expansion of multi-disciplinary teams in primary care. The people plan expects employers and organisations to support these areas of development.

Making the most of the skills and energy in our wider workforce

Volunteers have played a vital role during the pandemic and the people plan seeks to build on this and encourage more long-term volunteering. An NHS Cadet programme is being established to encourage young people to get involved and local systems should develop plans to support volunteers to move into employment with the NHS, if they wish to.

Educating and training our people for the future

The people plan sets out the intention to restart the training and placements that were put on hold during the first phase of the Covid-19 response. However, these will have a renewed emphasis on flexibility and building capabilities, recognising the varying demands on people during the pandemic. E-learning and online training will be expanded, and employers are expected to ensure staff have access to continuing professional development, with protected time for training.

Growing for the future

Covid-19 has encouraged a surge of interest in careers in the NHS and applications for training programmes have dramatically increased. Health Education England will continue to focus on investing in the future mental health workforce and training a number of cancer related roles and specialties.

The people plan sets out a number of routes for local and international recruitment, to take advantage of the renewed interest in joining the NHS. In addition, the Covid-19 response saw a significant of people returning to the NHS and the people plan seeks to maintain this enthusiasm and support former staff to return.

Retaining our people

In addition to the increased focus on flexible working, the people plan also encourages employers to design more varied roles to make the greatest use of a person's skills and experience. More should also be done to retain staff approaching retirement, with recent pension changes designed to allow people to do more if they wish, or to retire and return.

NHS England and NHS Improvement will launch a people plan delivery programme in summer 2020 to help NHS employers to value and retain their people by making their organisations a better place to work.

Alignment and collaboration across health and care systems

The people plan expects local systems to be the key units in planning for recovery; aligning workforce, operational and financial plans. Local systems need to understand the numbers and skills of their workforce and deploy them effectively. All of the elements described in the people plan at an organisational level must be supported by the wider system.

Partnership working with social care during the pandemic so far has provided support and shared workforce in some cases. The people plan expects the NHS and social care to continue to work closely to increase resilience and capability, particularly in preparation for winter and future outbreaks of Covid-19. The NHS also has a role as an anchor institution in local economic recovery, with the ability to target recruitment, volunteering, and apprenticeships in areas of greater deprivation, for example, to address inequalities.

Local systems have a key role to play in workforce planning and, during 2020/21, NHS England and NHS Improvement will refresh tools to support this as well as establish communities of practice for workforce analytics, modelling, design, and planning. Urgent work will be carried out to improve workforce data collection at all levels.

The people plan also expects local systems to support the recruitment and deployment of staff across organisations and geographies. This includes developing local workforce sharing agreements to enable rapid deployment of staff across localities and the development of a digital staff passport to simplify the high volume of temporary staff movement between organisations. Recruitment should be carried out across communities to reflect the diversity of the local population and systems should actively work with schools and other education establishments to support this.

Supporting our NHS people for the long term

The interim plan set out a number of themes which continue to be relevant now, such as increasing staff numbers, working differently and developing a more inclusive culture. The people plan builds on these but reflects the learning and rapid changes due to Covid-19. The actions within it cover the rest of 2020/21 with some longer-term ambitions set out. When the government confirms funding arrangements for the coming years, more actions will be added to develop a people plan that looks further into the future.

A programme of engagement will continue for the people plan with webinars, discussion groups and roundtables.

About the HFMA

The Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) is the professional body for finance staff in healthcare. For 70 years, it has provided independent and objective advice to its members and the wider healthcare community. It is a charitable organisation that promotes best practice and innovation in financial management and governance across the UK health economy through its local and national networks.

The association also analyses and responds to national policy and aims to exert influence in shaping the wider healthcare agenda. It has particular interest in promoting the highest professional standards in financial management and governance and is keen to work with other organisations to promote approaches that really are 'fit for purpose' and effective.

The HFMA offers a range of qualifications in healthcare business and finance at undergraduate and postgraduate level and can provide a route to an MBA in healthcare finance. The qualifications are delivered through HFMA's Academy which was launched in 2017 and has already established strong learner and alumni networks.

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