



Navigating the Workforce Waves

What is on the horizon for the people profession in healthcare, and why they need to respond

October 2024



Foreword



Michael Allen Partner and Global Workforce Lead, KPMG

KPMG UK has proudly worked with the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) to recognise its 50 year anniversary in 2024 in producing this report. The HPMA is the professional voice of people professionals in health and care across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, whose aim is to support and develop the people profession to improve the people management contribution in healthcare and ultimately improve patient care.

The health and care system in the UK is changing. In fact, it is changing globally. With rising pressure on all parts of the health and care system, burnout, workforce shortages and significant financial pressures, the people profession must ask itself, how can we better support a brighter future.

Importantly, for people services in the NHS in England, a clear direction was set in November 2021 with the publication of the NHS England 'Future of Human Resources & Organisational Development' report. Almost three years on, and whilst the priorities remain true, much has changed that requires people professionals to think and act differently to meet the demands and the need for greater integrated healthcare, greater levels of productivity and efficiency,

and more flexible employment models that better support the aims of 'Train, Retain and Reform', as detailed in the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP), which sets a vision for 2030.

There is always something to learn and something to share. People professionals must therefore be willing to look broader than the NHS for solutions; looking at global examples of good practice, and build wider networks and make it their business to find out what good looks like in other industries, and how that can then be translated into healthcare.

In testing the temperature of people services today in healthcare, we spoke with people professionals across the NHS to ask what it feels like working in the service today when considering existing pressures, and those on the horizon, and the opportunities that developments in technology, and patient and staff expectations have on a future health and care system.

This is a real moment for people professionals to be part of wider transformation, and ensure a bright future for the health & care system over the next decade.

Foreword



Julie Rogers **Chief Executive at the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA)**

The future of work is evolving rapidly, reshaping industries, workplaces, and the very nature of employment itself. In the face of technological advancements, global economic shifts, and changing workforce expectations, the role of people professionals has never been more critical. As organisations navigate this ever-shifting landscape, people professionals are increasingly called upon not only to manage talent but to help shape the strategic direction of their organisations.

Over the past 6 months, working with HPMA networks, KPMG have enabled a series of conversations with people professionals working in the NHS in England. Set within the context of the clear strategic direction and road map for our profession - NHS England's 'Futures' document - these conversations have given us a snapshot of what senior people leaders are thinking, experiencing, and anticipating today.

Many of the key trends and challenges NHS colleagues are anticipating on the horizon are not new. Neither are they unique to England. From the exploration of artificial intelligence and automation in HR processes to addressing the priorities of employee well-being and

compassionate people practices, facing up to the racism experienced by some of our staff, concerns about sexual safety and the need for more flexible working models, our people leaders are tasked with balancing technological innovation with the human side of work. The insights gathered through KPMG's study supplement the body of work that has already been laid out for England on the Future of HR & OD.

Coming from the Welsh NHS into the role of CEO three months ago and talking to HPMA members in Northern Ireland and Scotland recently, I know that the '6 waves' will resonate with colleagues in other parts of the UK. It would be great to see influencers and leaders across the four nations using this report to stimulate conversations with their peers and colleagues. We need a clear vision for our profession, we have one in England. I hope that policy makers in other nations will also find this study helpful.

During the remainder of this year and the early part of 2025, HPMA will be engaging with members on a refresh and renew of its strategy, with a view to launching HPMA 2025-2030 towards the end of the year. I am proud of our organisation and its 50 year history. HPMA is indebted to our members and commercial partners, without whom we wouldn't exist.

In that context I want to thank James Devine and the team at KPMG for leading this work and for providing evidence to inform the HPMA strategy refresh and ongoing developments.

Introduction

Despite a complex landscape, people professionals in the NHS have supported significant changes to the way in which health and care services are delivered, and been at the heart of supporting over 1 million people that work in the NHS. However, we know from our experience in the NHS and in other industries, that the people function could go from good to great, and become truly world class.

There are big challenges ahead. With 200+ People Services functions across NHS providers, it is inevitable that there will be variation in the way things are done, and the subsequent experience that people feel. The NHS spends £1.2bn on people services, employing c.20,000 people – with 40% of these teams focused on transactional or administrative activities. There are over 100 workforce system suppliers, with limited interoperability, integration or use of intelligent workflows and automation. The Future of HR & OD report (NHSE), published in November 2021 sets out a number of actions that will support people professionals begin to transform their services; it goes on to say that the people profession needs to take the opportunity of working at scale across systems – particularly on core transactional services – scaling services must therefore be seen as a priority for people professionals in order to create a more streamlined, standardised and modern day offer of digitally enabled people services.

The Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP), published in June 2023 forecasts that the NHS workforce will increase from 1.3m, to 1.8m over the next 10 years, and it sets out the ambition to recruit, retain and reform the way the NHS workforce provides care to patients and service users.

With greater demand for NHS services, there are significant opportunities for people professionals to transform the way in which future care is provided to patients; not just in hospitals, but across the health and care system; including care re-design which may involve residents and carers as part of that workforce in the future. There is a greater focus on creating cultures and environments to thrive, to support retention, and enhance the reputation of the NHS as a modern day employer.

There are big opportunities to collaborative, transform and digitalise people services, meaning that resources and people can be deployed to areas which require much needed investment of time, effort and focus. It is clear from those that participated in this report, that there are many areas that need greater levels of resource and expertise.

This report highlights 6 workforce waves to consider. For some, this report may act as a prompt to refocus efforts on areas that will better support the delivery of the Future of HR & OD report, and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. For others, it will support personal & professional development, by focusing on their development areas that may be better aligned to the CIPD professional map, but also on what the NHS needs and wants from a future people profession.

It is an exciting time for the people profession.

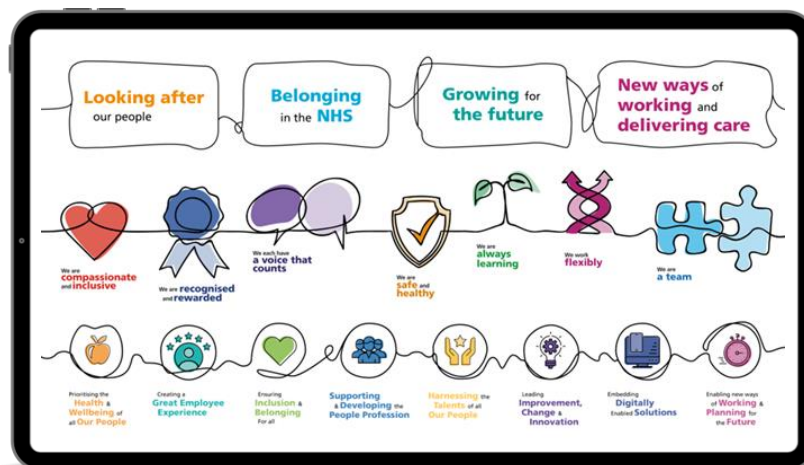


Top Priorities

The pillars of the NHSE 'Future of HR & OD' report are well known by people professionals across healthcare in England. Many of those who contributed to our findings could confidently state what their respective organisations were doing to support the broader aims of this and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan around Train, Retain and Reform, focusing primarily on the more transactional components such as higher levels of recruitment activity to fill vacancies, retention initiatives, describing ways in which they were supporting a growing number of employees suffering with well-being or mental health issues, or how the apprenticeship levy could better support career development

There is however a nervousness amongst people professionals about the skills required to transform the digital landscape, as well as how the advances in digital technology, such as AI, can better support the transformation of people services. We know from the KPMG future of HR report 2020, that 53% of employees expected technology to enhance their productivity over the next 3 years, and that globally, it is thought that 300m jobs will be replaced by AI before 2030 – this is the same period within which the Future of HR & OD report looks to transform people services so it would seem logical that AI should play a key role in that transformation.

It raises the question whether people professionals are doing enough to understand the full capability of AI today, and what roles it could better support in order to be ready for the future. In turn, not only can AI support the delivery of people services, but it will also be a key part of clinical redesign.



NHS England, Future of HR&OD Report

72%

of employees agree that continuous learning and upskilling will be crucial for them to stay relevant in their field

92%

of execs believe that people skills are more important than ever

53%

of employees expect technology to enhance their productivity over the next 3 years

31%

believe that tech improvements have damaged their work-life balance

300m

the number of jobs to be replaced by AI before 2030

The emerging awareness of neurodiversity at work further supports the aim of improving inclusion and belonging, and there is a willingness to learn from more people professionals on this topic, and its broader position in intersectionality and inclusion.

The CIPD 'neuroinclusion at work, survey (February 2024) reveals that although 83% of employers say the wellbeing of their people is a critical priority, and 70% say EDI is a critical priority for their organisation, just 60% say that neuroinclusion is a focus for their organisation. Furthermore, just over half (53%) of employees surveyed say their organisation has an open and supportive climate where employees are able to talk about neurodiversity.

It is evident that neuroinclusion will be a key factor in the redesign of workplace processes, and the way that work is organised in the future, given that as many as 20% of people will identify as neurodivergent in some way. It will be important therefore for people professionals to reconsider employment practices, and EDI strategies to accommodate a neurodiverse workforce.

It will also be important for people professionals to tackle other important issues such as anti-discriminatory behaviours (race, disability and LGBTQ+), and sexual safety in the workplace.

Highlights - What we heard

There is no doubt from those who participated in our research, that life in the people profession within the NHS is challenging. There are many competing demands, with many describing their role as 'reactive', 'overwhelming' and 'pressured' – perhaps this is no surprise. Equally, people professionals were 'excited about the future', and the direction set by the NHSE 'Future of HR & OD' actions, and the publication of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. There was a renewed optimism, and a real drive to help fellow people professionals move away from transactional processes, and to then redeploy, and retrain people to better support areas where people professionals believe their services lack the required investment to transform.



**when we get it right,
it feels good**



**we need to be better at using the
evidence base to support change**

The challenge of workforce supply is real, and one that must be tackled at pace. In 2021, Jeremy Hunt, as Chair of the Health Select Committee, stated that 'no-one on the front line has the remotest idea whether we are training enough people for the future', and there is frustration from people professionals as to whether issues such as effective and robust strategic workforce planning, that aligns workforce, demand and finance, is high enough on the priority list in terms of time and investment. The NHS LTWP helpfully sets a direction on supply, yet this issue, across health systems, was also noted as a key challenge, but one that is harder to achieve given the different terms and conditions, employment practices and perceived development and/or promotion opportunities when comparing the NHS with social care and community services. The NHSE led digital passport was seen as a good start to progress an ethos of a 'system workforce', but it was felt that it needed to be supported by more robust workforce modelling.



**we need to implement new
tech at pace, and deliver on
the benefits**



**we need to be courageous and
ambitious - take risks on doing
something different**



Supply is also impacted by retention, and there was a view from those who participated in our research that employees remain tired from the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, with many reviewing life decisions such as early retirement, flexible working, or less discretionary effort than before the pandemic; much of this is acknowledged in local staff survey reports. Additionally, the KPMG Future of HR Report (2020) highlights that 3 in 5 respondents to its survey believe that the HR function will rapidly become irrelevant if it doesn't modernise its approach to understand and plan for the future needs of the workforce; it will therefore be imperative to acknowledge how these factors influence the way in which people professionals must adapt to retain the experience and talent, and reform a future employment relationship that is both productive for the NHS and attractive to those that it wishes to hire and retain.



**we must move away from the operational
challenge, and get in to future planning mode**



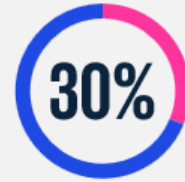
work as one NHS

A quick look at the global evidence base



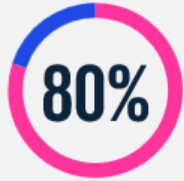
34% of HR leaders are exploring potential use cases for generative AI (Gartner 2023)

How can HR and IT departments work together to enable safe use of AI at a competitive pace?



By 2030, generative AI could automate 30% of work hours (McKinsey 2024). However, it will probably create more jobs than it replaces (Carter 2018).

How can organisations proactively redesign jobs and upskill in preparation for this change?



80% of employees agree that employer mental health support will be an important consideration when looking for future work (APA 2022)

How can organisations ensure that they have the capability to deliver on this focus?



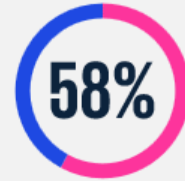
14% of UK adults work a gig job at least once a week, with this number expected to rise (TUC 2021)

How will HR and organisational strategies be affected if new legislation is introduced to support gig workers?



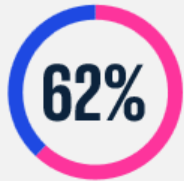
48% of 18 to 29 year-olds would like to work in a hybrid manner (McKinsey 2021)

How will organisations need to adapt as this generation becomes a larger proportion of the UK workforce?



58% of employees consider a company's social and environmental commitments when deciding where to work (WE Forum 2021)

Should organisations be actively ensuring that the workforce contributes to ESG topics and strategy?



62% of employees say that investment in upskilling influences whether they join, leave, or stay with an organisation (KPMG 2023)

Should organisations look at working with strategic technology partners to intelligently target skill gaps?



In 2025, Gen Z will account for 30% of the global workforce (WE Forum 2022)

How can organisations effectively adapt to the expectations and values of the next generation?

Introducing The Workforce Waves

The workforce waves have been developed from the themes captured during our research. Each one sets out the challenge for people professionals that are on the horizon, underpinned by an evidence base, and why acting upon them now will further support the delivery of high performing, digitally enabled people services of the future.

The 6 workforce waves



The workforce waves also recognise the alignment to the NHS England Future of HR & OD report, the CIPD Professional Map, and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP), with the intention being that navigating these waves will further support people professionals realise the ambitions set within each of the documents.

The NHS LTWP and Future of HR&OD set a clear direction for the people profession, supported by the CIPD Professional Map



Workforce Wave 1 - Digital Advances and Analytical Skills



Almost all of the participants in our research cited a need to further develop the skills and understanding of analytics and digital advancements in order to better support the transformation of people services. Whilst there is some use of robotic process automation (RPA) in the NHS, there are few fully integrated solutions that allow people professionals to support data-driven decision making. For example, it was cited that for many NHS Trusts, there is limited capability, and capacity within people services teams to triangulate workforce data, to drive improvements in quality or safety of patient services, or have an end-to-end joiner, mover, leaver system.

It is recognised that people services is increasingly becoming a data-driven field, and people professionals need to be confident in their ability to interpret data, and provide insights; the latter being of great importance. A study by the Harvard Business Review found that companies that use data analytics to make HR decisions are more likely to be successful, and in the context of healthcare, that means better patient outcomes, and better employee experience.

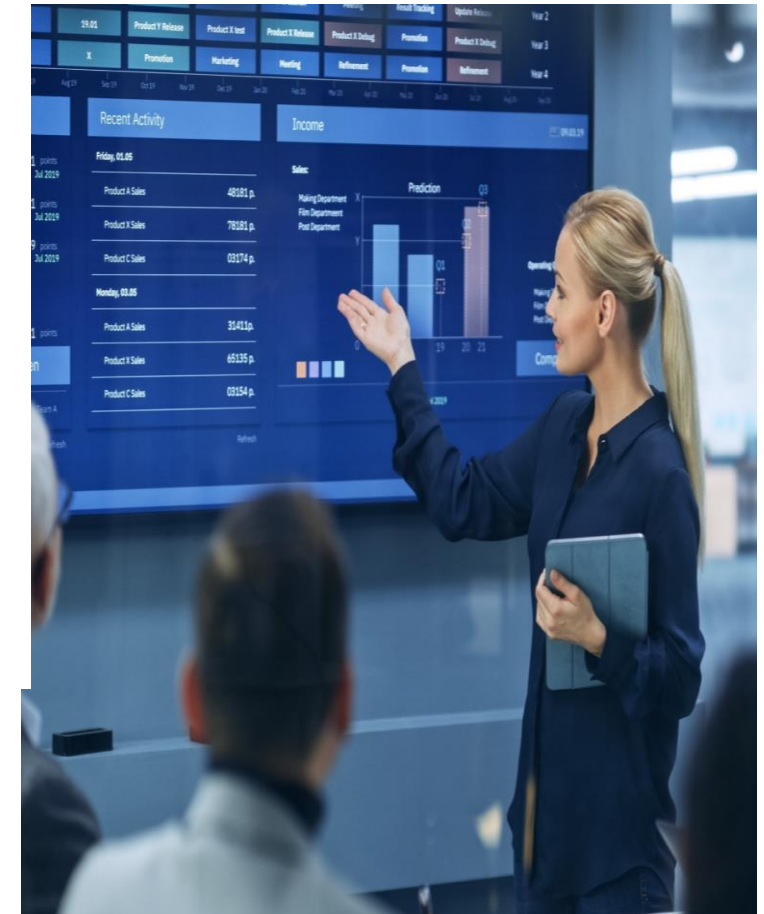
People professionals will also need to ensure that they remain close to emerging technology that will better support the provision of patient care over the next decade, which in turn will mean a change in ways of working – this will mean greater collaboration across the profession to learn and share good practice. Being bogged down by transactional processes will simply mean that people professionals do not have the time to modernise, and will lose competitive advantage, and credibility.

We heard that people professionals have an abundance of people related data available to them in the form of the NHS

staff survey, exist questionnaires, local pulse surveys and more. It was acknowledged during our findings that the biggest challenge is a feeling of being under resourced, or reactive to requests, which then give little time to provide any real insights, meaning that people professionals become the supplier of data, rather than using it to usefully inform business decisions, or cases for change. There is however an evident skills gap, and perhaps a resistance to agreeing whether digital and analytical skills are the role of people professionals.

It is clear however from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (Human Capital Analytics & Reporting, 2017) who suggest 4 key actions for people professionals to take to build these skills; Invest in your people professionals by providing training and development that enhances their people analytics skills; Grow your people analytics capability further by borrowing analysts and data scientists from other teams and hiring external consultants to undertake special projects; Invest in improving data and technologies that support better decision making; Build stronger cross-functional relationships to improve the impact of people analytics.

Building confidence in these skills will ensure people professionals are at the forefront of innovative people practices that better support patient outcomes, and staff satisfaction.



Workforce Wave 2 – Employee Value Proposition (EVP)



Those who participated to our research cited a number of things that needed to be true in order for the NHS to be seen as a future employer of choice. Much focus is given to a future workforce comprising of Gen Z, whereas research would indicate a greater consideration should also be given to the current workforce as part of greater focus on retention strategies.

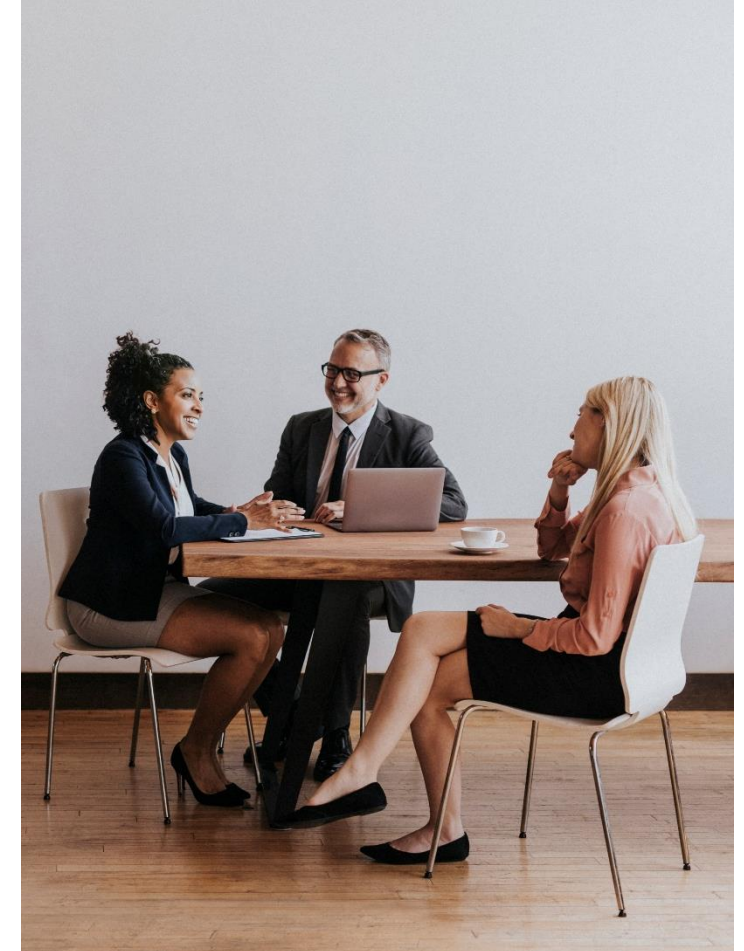
That said, is thought that by 2025, Gen Z will account for 30% of the global workforce. Known as digital natives, this is the first generation to have grown up entirely in the digital age, and have values, expectations, and skills that will shape the future of HR and their expectations of work. Many of the workplace expectations of a Gen Z workforce align to the pillars within the NHSE Future of HR&OD report. It will therefore be important that people professionals review their approach to employment models to ensure that they are fit for the future in recognising these findings.

Employee well-being, as part of an EVP, was a consistent theme in our research findings, and it was acknowledged that resources are often sparse when looking to invest in effective, long-term well-being strategies. Better understanding the research, and the detailed findings from the NHS Staff Survey will help guide people professionals design well-being initiatives that not only support a current workforce in relation to retention, but also support the broader aim of reforming the employment offer to new hires. This is supported by APA's 2022 Work and Well-Being Survey where it confirmed that employee expectations related to mental health support for example are shifting, with 71% of workers reporting that they believe their employers are more concerned about employees' mental health

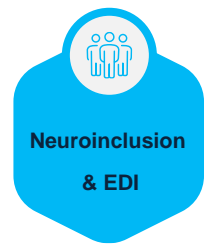
than in the past, and more than 80% agreed that how employers support mental health will be an important consideration for them when they look for future work. Looking to the future, KPMG's 2020 Future of HR survey found that improving the mental health and wellbeing of the workforce was expected to be a future focus of over half of organisations. On the other hand, when it comes to having the capability to actually deliver on this focus, it found that only 28% felt confident about this, suggesting a needed focus on this growing matter of importance. Being able to understand and articulate what the well-being offer is as part of an employee value proposition will therefore be an incredibly important component of both retention and recruitment strategies for people professionals to consider.

A personalised approach to flexible working was also cited during our research findings with people professionals believing that the NHS can often appear behind the times when considering flexible working. A recent McKinsey & Company study on workers' hopes for the future shows that 18-to-29-year-olds are most interested in a hybrid work set-up, working two to three days a week from home, and the rest in an office. This is something that people professionals will need to consider as this generation (Z) becomes an increasingly bigger proportion of the UK workforce. In addition, better understanding the demands of the existing workforce when it comes to flexible working will continue to support the retention of experience and skills, whilst greater efforts on supply materialise.

It will be a combination of these things, and a more transformative approach to a new value proposition that will support the broader aim of the train, and retain pillars of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.



Workforce Wave 3 – Neuroinclusion & EDI



Creating a neuro-inclusive workplace may seem like just an additional strand to existing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategies for many people professionals, predominantly because many people are unfamiliar with the concept, and organisations unaware of its importance.

The emerging awareness of neurodiversity at work supports a sense of inclusion and belonging; this will be critical to a future workforce given that as many as 20% of people will identify as neurodivergent in some way. It will be expected of people professionals that they are able to understand neuroinclusion, and support the redesign of processes and the way that work is organised. This will be particularly important when considering other factors such as the use of AI.

During our research with people professionals, there was certainly a commitment to the broader objective of EDI improvements, but less awareness of the term neurodivergent (considered to be the mainstream term for this large and varied group), or what considerations were needed to ensure this group were represented in decision making. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development report on neuroinclusion at work (CIPD, February 2024) says that people professionals should consider practices that create an inclusive workplace for all types of thinkers at work. Examples of this in practice include office design, flexibility in how work gets done, as well as when and where people work, managers proactively catering for different preferences in communication and how they give instructions, or how meetings are held. There will be a role for people professionals to support organisations in understanding these adaptations to 'the norm', and importantly how they may benefit the organisation.

People professionals can also make a significant contribution by both raising awareness about neurodiversity and the importance of having a neuroinclusive organisation, and in upskilling people to enable progress to be made. Also, formal policies and processes should be scrutinised through a neuroinclusive lens. Ultimately, being regarded as a neuroinclusive organisation will support the ability to attract, recruit and retain skilled individuals

It will be important for people professionals to lead the way, and work with EDI experts to create an inclusive work environment that values and leverages the diversity of all individuals, including their neurological differences. This approach will ensure that all employees, regardless of their neurological makeup, feel respected, valued and included in the workplace. They will need to support the organisation to better understand neurodivergence and accommodate different ways of thinking and working, which will be a different EDI lens than those currently covered by the Equality Act 2010 and associated impact assessments.

In addition to neuroinclusion, there was continuing concern of how people professionals continue to tackle equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice & behavioural challenges around race, LGBTQ+ and sexual safety in particular. Legislative changes and nationally implemented charters (sexual safety in healthcare for example) will go some way to support people professionals, however it will be expected that people professionals fill what is often considered a leadership void to tackle root causes locally, and be skilled enough to address issues when they occur, and create the right culture to support a 'speak up' ethos.



Workforce Wave 4 – Artificial Intelligence



Over the next decade, it is anticipated that Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) could add 1.2% to the level of UK productivity, or in terms of 2022 level of GDP, £31 billion additional output in the UK per year (KPMG report: Generative AI and the UK labour market). Ethical AI integration stands as the foremost priority for HR leaders, emphasising fairness, transparency, and bias mitigation throughout HR processes. Robust data governance comes next, with a focus on ensuring data quality, security, and compliance with privacy regulations to guarantee the reliability of Generative AI insights. Despite data privacy, bias and ethical concerns, AI is being deployed at a rapid pace; 34% of HR leaders globally are already exploring potential use cases and opportunities when it came to generative AI, and therefore people professionals across healthcare will need to invest in developing these skills in order to remain both a competitive employer, but also one that supports greater workforce redesign and innovation to support the advances in clinical care.

Many people professionals see a greater use of process automation, and integration at the heart of transforming HR services. With a focus on scaling services across the NHS, there is a need for people professionals to further develop the skill set to understand the capabilities of modern technologies, including AI. Embedding digitally enabled solutions will reduce transactional or administrative activities, and allow resources to be refocused on other urgent people related areas such as workforce planning, retention and effective business partnering.

To make the most of AI, and in fact all technology improvements, people professionals will need to work closely with IT colleagues in implementing and managing AI driven tools, and a clear roadmap to evidence the case for investment

and quantification of impact, as well as developing a roadmap for future people services transformation. By fostering collaboration between people services and IT, organisations can effectively deploy AI solutions that enhance areas such as recruitment (onboarding), talent management, improve decision-making, and drive innovation across the organisation.

By 2030, in a midpoint adoption scenario, up to 30 percent of current hours worked could be automated or augmented by generative AI. Early research believed that this would result in a large amount of job losses. However, this theory has been contested, for example, by Carter (2018), who revises projected AI-related job loss by 2037 downward—from 30% to 20% and believes that AI will create more jobs than it takes. To tackle this anticipated transition, Bhardwaj et al. (2020) suggest that re-skilling and up-skilling people will therefore become a high priority, which will further support the triple aim of train, retain and reform as part of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. This also supports the findings from the KPMG CEO Outlook Survey report 2024, where despite public concern around the risk of redundancies, CEOs recognise the transformative potential of AI and remain confident that it will not have a detrimental impact on the workforce, with over three quarters (76 percent) of CEOs anticipating AI will not fundamentally reduce the number of jobs within their organisations over the next three years. Yet, CEOs also recognise their workforce will need to adapt to fully harness the opportunity, as when asked about their organisations current AI readiness, only 38 percent of CEOs were confident that their employees have the right skills to fully leverage the benefits. Furthermore, 58 percent agree that the integration of generative AI has made them rethink the skills required for entry-level roles.

The need for people professionals to better understand AI and its capabilities will be critical to the success of the broader transformation of people services, and having digitally enabled solutions in place, and at pace. In the KPMG Future of HR report in 2020, 56% of respondents felt that preparing the workforce for AI was HR's biggest priority. In contrast, during our discussions with people professionals in the NHS, there was a nervousness about AI, but an acceptance that this was a key area that needed to be better understood. AI can revolutionise people services by automating repetitive tasks, enhancing recruitment practices through data-driven insights, improving employee engagement through more personalised experiences, and optimising talent management strategies to name a few.

In the context of the actions listed within the Future of HR & OD report, AI can play a critical role in reforming how people services are delivered, and the experience that candidates, and employees have of joining, and being part of the NHS.



Workforce Wave 5 – Employee Voice & Engagement



There is a clear commitment from the people profession to listen to their workforce, and turn that listening into action. Undeniably, keeping the human element in healthcare feels like a cornerstone of the purpose of the people profession. A study by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) found that engaged NHS staff are more likely to provide high-quality care and are less likely to leave the NHS – the importance of focusing on the things that mean something to employees, will therefore need to be at the top of the priority list for people professionals.

The NHS Staff Survey is found to be the core indicator of morale and engagement, although many Trusts undertake various other means to collect feedback from employees. Acting on employee voice surveys, such as the NHS staff survey will not be new to people professionals. Much human resources and organisational development effort goes in to addressing deep rooted cultural issues, with evidently much success over the last decade. However, during our research, we discovered that there was a growing feeling that there was less alignment between how people were feeling, versus the impact that was having on patient outcomes. This will be important in the context of a study by the Health Foundation which found that a strong employee voice is associated with improved patient safety and staff well-being.

A study by the NHS Staff Survey found that staff satisfaction is associated with higher levels of patient satisfaction. This supports the work of people like Professor Michael West, who has conducted extensive research on the factors that influence employee engagement, such as leadership, work-life balance, and recognition and reward. In addition, Professor West is

interested in the implications of technological change for the future of work (as mentioned in workforce wave 1). He has studied how organisations can adapt to the changing nature of work and how they can create jobs that are meaningful and engaging for employees; such as the impact of AI.

These will be incredibly important factors for people professionals to consider, and to develop the skills of fellow professionals to consider how we build a sense of belonging by effective and meaningful engagement. During our research, people professionals acknowledged how good engagement with employees will support the delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, and importantly, the pillars of retain and reform.

In addition, the ongoing need for employees to have a voice will be supported by people professionals, working with freedom to speak up guardians and others to triangulate information and data, to better support a true picture of the position in their Trusts or systems.

A study by the Institute for Employment Studies found that NHS organisations with effective employee voice mechanisms are more likely to be innovative and adaptable. This will be important in realising the impact of the other workforce waves, in the broader context of achieving the ambitions set out within the NHS Future of HR & OD report and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

Turning the listening into tangible action and change will be an expectation of people professionals in the future.



Workforce Wave 6 – Strategic Workforce Planning



It was universally agreed during our research that people professionals felt that strategic workforce planning was relatively low down on the priority list; many also suggested that the skill set to develop effective strategic workforce plans was lacking.

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan refers to the importance of strategic workforce planning, and how it must bring together workforce, service and finance planning in order to truly be effective. Therefore the importance of this workforce wave, and its consideration in the context of 'train, retain and reform' cannot be underestimated.

The delivery of safe and effective care across a system is predicated on having sufficient capacity, a skilled workforce, and confidence that the system is working with its education institutions to ensure the supply is meeting the future demand profile. Within workforce wave 1, people professionals referred to the need to develop greater data and analytical skills, and it is these skills that will ensure that people professionals can be the driving force behind robust strategic workforce plans for their respective systems or organisation.

The NHS LTWP recognises that the pace of technological and scientific progress means it can be a challenge to predict with certainty how the workforce needs of the NHS will look in 15 years time. However, people professionals expressed optimism with how future use of key enablers such as the apprenticeship levy, additional medical training places and alternative routes into professional roles (including role design and redesign) could help shape plans which could, with higher degrees of confidence, support a 5 year forward look.

For this to be effective, and be seen as a greater priority, people professionals will need to ensure that they have the capacity to invest time, effort and money in a solution that aligns workforce, finance and demand data, underpinned by scenarios that support OBR like projections of workforce requirements. Many people professionals reported having a workforce planning solution, but in most cases, these were on platforms such as excel, not integrated, were resource heavy, and often seen as a HR tool rather than a business tool.

Aside from the business benefits, a study by the Center for Effective Organisations (CEO) found that HR professionals who are involved in strategic workforce planning are more likely to be seen as strategic partners by business leaders. This will be important as people services are seen to be more digitally enabled, and therefore stronger business partners given a renewed focus on priorities that are of strategic importance, as opposed to being involved in transactional tasks.

More effective strategic workforce planning will also be fundamental in achieving the new Governments focus on healthcare, and aligning services closer to home, greater digital transformation and associated workforce redesign that supports innovations in patient care.

Failing to recognise the importance of strategic workforce planning, the skills gaps amongst people professionals, and the lack of a robust planning solution now will simply mean a continuation of short term decision making, rising temporary staffing costs, and an inability to meet the future care demands of communities.



So what next?



James Devine
Director and UK Lead for Health & Care Workforce, KPMG

HR Magazine number one most influential HR practitioner 2024

The 6 workforce waves that we have identified from our research are from the voice of the people profession. There is no doubt that the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, and the NHS Future of HR & OD report are well known and respected by people professionals in the NHS, and there is a clear commitment to deliver the actions within them.

From our research and work with many NHS Trusts and Systems, there are many challenges on the horizon for people professionals to navigate, and it will be expected that people professionals are more aware of what is on the horizon, and how they can subsequently best prepare for the future. That is the intention of this report; to support people professionals be the best they can be.

The NHS remains one of the countries most prized assets, and for me, like many of my colleagues at KPMG who have spent time working with or in the NHS, there is a shared passion in ensuring that the services are world class, and that the people profession matches that world class ambition.

There is a lot to do, but being in the people profession is a privilege, and one that people professionals should grasp, and ensure that they, in their words, put that magic in to HR.

The workforce waves are not only from the voice of the profession, but they are also evidence based. They are the key things on the horizon, and describe how people professionals can respond. The waves that we have identified will support the development and capability of people professionals, and ensure that they can better support the delivery of high performing people services.

During our research, we heard countless examples of optimism, excitement, and a passion for the people profession. It is this passion that will drive the improvements and digital innovations in people services, that will directly improve the services, experience and outcomes for those that proudly work in health & care, and for the patients and service users that they serve.

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Particular thanks and appreciation to those NHS Chief People Officers who spoke at our roadshows and shared their valuable views and insights.



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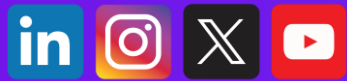
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