

Escalation and Assurance Report  
Workforce Equality Committee  
Meeting Date: 10 September 2021

**Key discussion points and matters to be escalated from the meeting:**

**Alert:**

- No new/unknown issues identified in the meeting which require “alert” level escalation to Board; **but note** the (already known) sickness management issues below – if those issues were not already known, I would have classed them as an “Alert” due to their significance and the need for ongoing action and monitoring.

**Advise:**

- Ongoing (albeit known) risks re **sickness management, recruitment and training:** action being taken designed to mitigate risks but requires further scrutiny.
  - Recent/ongoing sickness figures a concern generally, driven by high levels of reported stress, anxiety and depression, as well as COVID-related issues; particularly in the 0-19 and district nursing teams. Consideration to be given to the board commissioning a “strategic review” of the 0-19 team (which could include but extend beyond sickness and workforce issues).
  - Concerns re fewer staff returning via the “retire and return” option, both now and over the next five years or so.
  - Evidence (anecdotal) the Trust losing staff to neighbouring trusts (e.g. Leeds).
  - Concern re potential impact on workforce pressures of school vax programme.
- Equality data not as strong as hoped for:
  - NHS Workforce **Race Equality Standard** (WRES) results not as strong as expected (deteriorating in some areas) – more work required to push for further improvement, given the importance the Trust places on this.
  - NHS Workforce **Disability Equality Standard** (WDES) were stronger, relatively, but, again, a push for further improvement still needed (e.g. only 45% disabled staff said they feel work is valued (suggesting over 50% don't!))
  - **Gender Pay Gap** report indicated slight deterioration; but, in context, the Trust continues to perform very well relative to comparable trusts.
  - The Committee also assessed data re **sexual orientation** in some detail.
- The Trust’s “**Smarter Working**” programme is advancing (which incorporates plans re post-pandemic flexibility), as part of the wider TWICs programme: the Committee challenged timeframes; and will continue to monitor and push for the efficient and effective delivery of this important programme.

**Assure:**

- The Committee continues to scrutinise and be transparent about equality data re **protected characteristics** (such as sex, race, sexual orientation, and disability).
- **Brexit** risks continue to be low, given low numbers linked to relevant countries.
- Wide engagement (via “crowd sourcing” and workshops etc) has led to an impressive long-term “**belonging and inclusion**” **strategic plan**, with a better resourced team now in place to support and assess this important area of work.
- Reasonable interim arrangements in place re **FTSU** work; but important for new FTSU Guardian (starting Oct) to “hit the ground running” and progress the agenda.
- Preparations for 2021 **staff survey** on track.
- “**Staff story**”: staff member appreciated flexible working options during COVID, particularly given her long-term conditions, and support provided by manager and the Beacon Network. Hoped such flexibility will be maintained post-pandemic.

**Risks discussed:**

- The Board Assurance Framework and Corporate Risk Register were considered.

**New risks identified:**

- No significant new risks identified.

**Report completed by: Simon Lewis, Chair of the Committee**