

Escalation and Assurance Report
Workforce & Equality Committee (“WEC”)
Meeting Date: 17 Feb 2022

Key discussion points and matters to be escalated from the meeting

Alert:

- The workforce challenges facing the Trust at present – and other organisations like it – are well-known. No new “alerts” arose from this WEC meeting.

Advise:

- **Sickness absence** linked to C-19 and isolation remained high in Dec and Jan; but is now coming down.
- WEC discussed – in an open, inclusive and constructive manner – the situation regarding the Government’s (widely reported and high profile) change of position on the **mandatory vaccination of NHS staff**, along with the Trust’s response to that and the Trust’s overall management in relation to this challenging matter. WEC heard candid views from chairs/members of some of the Trust’s staff networks, and others. WEC was told that some staff had lost a substantial amount of trust and confidence in their employer as a result: some people (e.g. including some ethnically-diverse staff) have lost trust and confidence because they have felt under inappropriate pressure to get vaccinated etc; some people (e.g. including some staff with long-term conditions) have lost trust and confidence because of the Government’s recent change in position. Acknowledgment that the Trust’s Chief Executive had met with networks, which was seen as positive; and that there is a (“safe space”) “listening and learning event” scheduled for March, which was seen as an opportunity to help repair relationships under strain. Recognition, too, that this has been a difficult time/issue for those working in HR. General feeling that there is a significant number of staff who, albeit for potentially different reasons, are, at present, feeling in need of greater support in relation to this matter and the Staff Support and Therapy Service is offering safe space support circles where peers can come together to share their experiences of Vaccine as a Condition of Employment measures, with the support of a psychology facilitator; one to one support is also available. WEC also noted (albeit without feeling able to draw any reliable inference from this) that the FTSU Guardian had not had any issues raised specifically in relation to the staff vaccination development. Chair asked for an update, at the April WEC meeting, from the learning event in March.
- Broad agreement that there was merit in the Trust, in relation to the above issue and more generally (including in relation to the delivery of the Belonging and Inclusion Plan), considering more fully a distinction between being merely “culturally aware” and being “culturally competent”; and to continue to strive to achieve the latter as well the former.
- **Labour turnover** remained above target; but was considered, in all the circumstances, to be comparatively better than it could have been.
- **Gender pay gap** data/analysis considered. Mean gap is 7.6%. Median gap is minus 5.8%. Average hourly pay is £17.98 for males, £16.62 for females. WEC reminded itself that 80% of staff are female and, as a consequence, of the particular relevance of the principles relating to gender pay/issues. Trust continues to perform well, when benchmarked against comparable trusts, on the gender pay gap. Proposed recommendations relating to the ongoing gender pay gap analysis/work/scrutiny, and to the similarly important ethnicity and disability pay gap analysis/work/scrutiny, were supported/approved.

- **Fire safety training** compliance below target (91.38% against 95%); but plan in place to sort (and still performing better than other trusts).

Assure:

- **Actions** arising from the recent Joint Committee Meeting(s) are being tracked and will be scrutinised at the April meeting, along with other ongoing actions (including the matter relating to the community nursing services transformation process, regarding band 6 roles).
- Indicative draft results from the **annual staff survey** considered but remain “under embargo” currently. Next steps agreed, including those relating to benchmarking and further analysis. Full results expected in April.
- WEC considered presentation/paper regarding **the future** of NHS HR/OD functions, nationally, over 10 year span, and the People and OD function at “place”. General feeling of assurance that the Trust’s strategic approach is aligned with broader national strategic trends.
- **People Development Strategy, action plan and KPIs** approved.
- Revised **Terms of Reference** agreed.
- Draft **Annual Report** for WEC considered; but deferred to April meeting, in order, primarily, to incorporate matters relating to today’s meeting.
- To assist with senior-level **handovers and transitions**, the meeting was observed by: (1) the two new Non-Executive Directors; (2) the new Interim Director of HR/OD; and (3) the new Interim Deputy Director of HR/OD.
- WEC informed about changes to some key roles with the HR/OD department.
- Informative “**staff story**” from a support worker (specifically an apprentice) in the CAMHS crisis team. Good to hear, among other things, that management responded effectively when she identified issues/concerns about intensive hours.

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