

Agenda item 4.iv.b

Report to:	Board of Directors	Date: 02 April 2026
Report from:	Chair of the Workforce Committee Part 1 Amanda Fadero	
Principal Objective/ Strategy and Title	GOVERNANCE: To update the Board on discussions at the Workforce Committee	
Board Assurance Framework Entries	BAF	
Regulatory Requirement	Well Led/Code of Governance:	
Equality Considerations	To have clear and effective processes for assurance of Committee risks	
Key Risks	None believed to apply	
For:	Insufficient information or understanding to provide assurance to the Board	

Purpose

This report provides an update to the Board on key discussions, assurances, and areas of focus considered by the Workforce Committee as part of the organisation’s governance framework.

1. Issues of Interest to the Board

- 1.1 BAF Risk ID 3733** – “IF the Trust does not have an affordable workforce plan and delivery plan that is integrated with operational and financial planning” – has reduced its residual risk rating from 16 to 12. The adequacy of controls has also improved and is now assessed as Amber.

This improvement reflects the significant strengthening of workforce planning controls and the closer alignment between workforce, operational, and financial planning introduced since January 2026.

The Board is asked to **accept** this recommendation.

- 1.2 Staff Story.** A staff story was presented by Akelia Parnell, a staff nurse on Five South. Akelia shared her experience as a participant in the final cohort of the EDI initiative. She expressed her gratitude for the opportunity and described the programme as both rewarding and transformative.

For her, the experience was about finding her voice, building connections and friendships across different backgrounds, roles, and experiences, and having a

safe space to be curious and move beyond policies and posters into real lived experience. She described the programme as empowering, enhancing her communication skills, and giving her newfound confidence. She also noted improvements in her leadership skills, including her ability to take initiative and support colleagues.

Akelia then shared her spoken-word presentation on “finding your voice,” previously delivered at the cohort’s final day. Its impact—both at that time and on the committee today—was inspiring, powerful, and extraordinary.

1.3 Director of Workforce & OD report.

The Director’s Workforce Report was comprehensive, providing detailed information and evidence of progress across most areas of the workforce plan. Key areas explored in further depth included:

Fairer Recruitment – Further progress is required on reducing bias within recruitment. The role and impact of Cultural Ambassadors, who sit on interview panels and contribute in other arenas, is currently under review to determine effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement.

Appraisals – Appraisal rates remain below expectations. While the process has been streamlined, staff feedback through the staff survey indicates that the quality of appraisals—and the consistency with which they are conducted—remains insufficient. This area requires a refreshed approach.

Critical Care Attendance Management Programme – Although confidence in managing absence has improved, attendance rates have not. Further work is now underway to identify how to deliver a more positive impact. As HR support is due to cease at the end of Quarter 1, consideration is required regarding how to embed learning in Critical Care and spread improvements across the wider organisation.

Oliver McGowan Training – It was disappointing to note that some staff who had been allocated places on Oliver McGowan training had not taken them up. While a comprehensive next steps report was provided, assurance was given that—despite challenges relating to staff release, backfill, and cost—the Trust is reviewing patient experiences, outcomes, and alternative training mechanisms. Proactive advance planning and rostering will be essential.

2. Quarter 3 Workforce Strategy Progress Report

Clear progress has been achieved across all domains of the strategy, demonstrating increased confidence in operational management and a strong focus on delivering the strategic support required by staff in an ever-changing environment.

Ongoing areas of concern include:

- Bullying and harassment
- Pressures on a stretched workforce
- Higher-than-average burnout rates

While improvements such as significant reductions in time-to-hire have been embedded, deeper understanding and tailored planning are still required in areas such as:

- Appraisals
- Mandatory training uptake
- Bullying and harassment

The report highlights the significant effort and commitment of the workforce team in achieving this level of progress.

The **Quarter 4 report** will be presented at the next committee meeting, alongside the approach of the new Chief People Officer in developing the refreshed workforce strategy.

The Trust continues to demonstrate strong and improving performance across its workforce agenda, with clear evidence of increasing maturity, alignment, and grip between workforce, operational, and financial planning.

3. Workforce Committee Self-Assessment

The committee reviewed the self-assessment (Appendix 1). While overall feedback was extremely positive, a number of neutral responses were noted and considered a concern.

Following reflective discussion, it was agreed that the committee is currently saturated with data and detail. Given the significant progress made over the last three years, it is timely to take stock and reset.

Recommendations include:

- Routine, business-as-usual workforce reporting should be overseen through operational governance routes.
- The committee should focus on areas of escalation and newly prioritised actions, with clearly articulated expected impacts.
- The committee should play a key role in the refresh of the Workforce Strategy and development of priorities for 2026/27.

4. Staff Survey

The Trust's strongest areas remain:

- Compassionate and inclusive culture
- Effective teamworking
- Flexible working

- Overall staff engagement

Staff report strong alignment with organisational values, positive relationships with colleagues and managers, and high levels of pride in the care delivered. However, persistent challenges remain, including:

- High levels of burnout and work pressure
- Concerns about staffing levels
- Moderate levels of feeling valued and recognised
- Limited confidence that concerns raised will be acted upon

Ongoing inequalities in staff experience were again highlighted. Staff from ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled staff report poorer experiences in areas such as:

- Bullying and harassment
- Career progression
- Overall engagement

These continue to be significant local priorities.

5. Unison Anti-Racism Charter

The committee received a verbal update following discussion at the Executive Committee. A decision was taken not to sign the Unison Anti-Racism Charter, as the organisation has already signed the regional anti-racism charter, and therefore does not need to sign both.

Unison will be written to, providing:

- A full explanation of the decision
- Evidence supporting the Trust's position
- Demonstration of progress already made in this area.

6. Job Evaluation

Following the internal audit of job evaluation, the committee received an updated report outlining:

- A strong position overall
- Clear work underway to strengthen compliance and assurance

The committee was assured by the report and the progress to date.

7. Safer Learning Environment Charter (SLEC)

The review identified:

- Strong infrastructure for supporting learners
- Clear policies
- Multiple reporting routes

- Good alignment with the NHS People Promise

However, gaps remain between policy and lived experience, particularly in high-pressure environments or where senior staff behaviours go unchallenged.

While learners understand how to raise concerns, some still fear repercussions. Short placements and inconsistent digital access also limit opportunities to seek support.

Overall, the Trust has solid foundations, but targeted cultural and operational improvements are required to ensure all learners feel consistently safe, valued, and able to speak up.