

Agenda Item 02.ii

Report to:	Trust Board of Directors	Date: 4 September 2025
Report from:	Oonagh Monkhouse, Director of Workforce and OD Lorraine Howard-Jones, Deputy Director of Workforce and OD	
Principal Objective/Strategy and Title:	Job Evaluation – NHSE assurance and monitoring requirements	
Board Assurance Framework Entries:	Staff Engagement Recruitment Retention	
Regulatory Requirement	Equal Pay Legislation SoS and NHSE requirements	
Equality Considerations:	As per the regulatory requirements set out above.	
Key Risks:	Staff engagement, staff retention, equal pay	
For:	Noting and Approval	

Introduction

The 2023/24 Agenda for Change (AfC) pay award deal included several commitments to look at issues that impact NHS Staff. This report concerns two of these commitments, firstly the commitment to support the fair and consistent application of the NHS Job Evaluation Scheme and secondly a commitment to improve career progression for nursing staff.

Following the Secretary of State's April 2025 ministerial statement and the NHS Staff Council's updated guidance, there is renewed national scrutiny on the robustness of job evaluation (JE), particularly for nursing and midwifery roles. The NHS Staff Council and NHS England are now requiring organisations to take immediate steps to strengthen local job evaluation practices.

While NHS Trust Boards remain legally accountable for compliance with national JE standards, NHS England will monitor progress through regional workforce directors and a new national JE dashboard.

From Autumn 2025, organisations will be expected to:

1. Complete a **Board-level readiness assessment**, confirming appointment of a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) or executive sponsor for JE, and providing assurance that senior leaders have reviewed and understood the updated nursing and midwifery profiles and guidance. The [readiness assessment section](#) of this report sets out this baseline Board Readiness Assessment with our proposed response which the Board is asked to consider and approve.
2. Participate in a **national data collection exercise**, reporting key workforce metrics and job evaluation activity for nursing and midwifery roles.
3. Undertake a **partnership-based audit of local job evaluation practices** (using *Appendix 1* of the national guidance – attached as Appendix 1) in collaboration with local trade unions, with the audit expected to launch in Autumn–Winter 2025.

We are well placed to respond to these requests. The Board participated in a development session in April 2025 which focused on the Agenda for Change pay arrangements including the Job Evaluation Scheme and will be aware of the publication of the Nursing and Midwifery Profiles so will have a good level of knowledge of the relevant issues and the Board's responsibilities with regards the operation of the scheme. Our work on job evaluation and improving career progress for nurses is closely linked and

comes under our Career Pathways Programme which the Board will be familiar with as over the last 18 months progress has been reported on a bi-monthly basis to the Workforce Committee and to the Joint Staff Council.

The following report sets out our response to the Board Readiness Assessment which the Board are asked to approve. It also provides assurance on our ability to respond to the data collection exercise due later in the autumn and the requirement to audit our job evaluation practice.

Finally, and for completeness, the Workforce Committee were given a detailed update on the progress of the Career Pathways Programme at its meeting in July 2025, and a short summary of that report is provided below – **Career Pathways Update**

Readiness Assessment

The readiness assessment is set out in the table below. The Trust can answer yes to all the areas of assurance set out in this assessment and the Board is asked to confirm their agreement with this assessment.

Baseline Board Readiness Assessment

Metric/area	Description	Confirmation
SoS Written Ministerial Statement	The Board has read and understood that all staff should be paid correctly for the work they do as set out in the Secretary of State's 23 April 2025 written ministerial statement	Yes (copy of statement attached as appendix 2)
NHS England System Letter	The Board has received and understood NHS England's 30 May 2025 Job Evaluation Letter to Boards	Yes (copy of letter attached as appendix 3)
Board SRO/Sponsor	The Board has appointed a board level SRO or sponsor to oversee the JE process	Yes Director of Workforce and OD
NHS Staff Council nursing and midwifery profile review guidance	The Board is aware of the publication of the Nursing and Midwifery profile review and understand the priority is to review nursing and midwifery job descriptions	Yes
	The Board have read and understood NHS Staff Council Guidance: Action needed on job evaluation outcomes for nursing and midwifery staff (including Appendix 1 – Assessment of job evaluation practices, which will inform an upcoming national JE practice audit)	Yes (copy attached as appendix 1)

Collection of Key Workforce Metrics

NHSE will request a data return in the autumn on key workforce metrics relating to job evaluation and nursing profiles. While the exact format is not yet confirmed, the Trust is well placed to respond. Through our Career Pathways Programme and the updated Job Evaluation (JE) process introduced earlier this year, we can provide clear assurance that: -

- a) We hold accurate records of all nursing profiles.
- b) All profiles have been updated within the last six months.
- c) Each has been assessed against the new national nursing profiles published in June.
- d) We are compliant with national JE terms.
- e) Records of JE panels and outcomes are maintained and subject to consistency checking; and
- f) All JE activity, along with our wider career pathways programme, is undertaken in partnership with our local trade union colleagues.

Going forward, it is expected that organisations will demonstrate regular reporting of JE activity, including any changes to banding outcomes. While this has not previously been part of our routine reporting, from September we will incorporate JE metrics into our regular reporting to the Workforce Committee.

Audit of Progress

NHSE has confirmed that an audit of progress will be undertaken against the NHS Staff Council's assessment of JE practices (Appendix 1 of the national guidance). In preparation, the Trust has already commissioned an internal audit of its JE process, which commenced in mid-August. Findings will be presented to the Workforce Committee on completion.

We are confident that the Trust will be able to demonstrate a favourable position against both the internal audit and the NHSSC audit tool. We will complete the audit against the national tool in September, in partnership with our local trade unions. Outcomes from this work will be reported to the Board at its October meeting.

Career Pathways Update

A detailed report was presented to the Workforce Committee in July 2025 and is included in the Board reference pack. The report confirmed that the Career Pathways Programme had reached a key milestone with all Band 4–7 nursing roles having been reviewed and validated through the strengthened job evaluation process. This work provides a robust and transparent picture of how our nursing workforce aligns both to updated local role profiles and to the newly published national profiles.

Alongside updating the profiles, managers were asked to provide a high-level assessment of where they believe their staff currently sit in relation to their role and whether they were developing, fully competent, or working beyond their banding. The outcome showed that 41% of staff are considered to be still in development, which is above the Trust-wide tolerance of 30%. This may be contributing to service pressures and underlines the importance of accelerating targeted development support for these staff.

Encouragingly, 57% of staff are fully operative in role, and only 2% (16 staff) were identified as consistently working above their pay band. These cases are subject to a further, detailed review with the potential for financial remedy and role alignment.

The value of the Career Pathways work is already evident. In Cardiology, where the programme was piloted, the proportion of staff in development has reduced from 59% to 45%, and all staff previously working above band have since progressed appropriately. This demonstrates the work of this programme and in particular the data arising from it, can be used to target development interventions, effectively manage talent, improve workforce planning, strengthen retention, and enhance service delivery.

The next stage of the programme will focus on structured Career Pathway conversations with all Band 4–7 nursing staff. These discussions will validate managers' initial assessments, give staff the opportunity to raise concerns if they believe they are working beyond their band, and provide the foundation for mapping career pathways, clarifying aspirations, and commissioning targeted development. Where supporting resource remains available there are plans for an online Career Pathways Tool which will embed this process into appraisals, talent management and local workforce planning from 2026.

Beyond nursing, there is growing interest from other staff groups to adopt the Career Pathways approach across the Trust. This is now under active consideration at Executive level, with a decision on the preferred approach expected shortly.

Our immediate priorities are to conclude the nursing phase by September 2025, including career conversations, role adjustments, and financial reparations where required, while establishing a permanent centralised role profile library to avoid future drift. Executive agreement is sought on the delivery model for wider rollout, alongside securing the necessary programme resources. A further update will be provided to the Workforce Committee in September 2025, setting out early outcomes from the career conversations stage and the proposed phased plan for extending this work across the Trust.

Conclusion

The Trust is well positioned to respond to the new national requirements on job evaluation, with Board-level awareness, strong governance, and a robust approach already in place through the Career Pathways Programme. The readiness assessment confirms assurance across all required areas, while the updated nursing role profiles and strengthened evaluation processes provide a sound basis for the forthcoming national data collection and audit.

The Career Pathways Programme is delivering tangible benefits. It has improved the accuracy and fairness of banding decisions, provided better visibility of staff development needs, and generated actionable insights for workforce planning. Early outcomes, particularly from the Cardiology pilot, show that this work is already supporting retention, enabling career progression, and reducing risks of staff working above their pay band.

The next phase will focus on concluding the nursing programme by September 2025, embedding structured career conversations, addressing financial remedies where appropriate, and establishing a permanent role profile library. Executive agreement on the delivery model and resources for wider rollout will ensure these gains are extended Trust-wide, supporting fair pay, career development, and sustainable workforce planning.

The Trust Board of Directors is requested to:

- Note the NHS England job evaluation monitoring requirements.
- Approve a positive response to the Board assurance statements.
- Note progress with the implementation of the Career Pathways Programme and the next steps planned.