

Report title: Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust update	
Report to: Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust has three strategic goals, focused on quality of care, equity for our population and opportunities for our people. We consider our annual objectives against this strategy in the context of the needs of the mid and south Essex population, and the integrated care strategy of our system partners.

In this report to the Committee, the Trust presents updates on its recruitment and retention, including:

- 1) Recruitment and retention improvement journey in numbers: turnover and vacancies
- 2) Actions the Trust has taken to improve retention mapped against the NHS People Promise
- 3) The Trust's priorities over the next 12 months: Valuing Our People programme

There is also an update in response to a query at the previous meeting about oncology staffing at Southend Hospital

2. Action required

To note the contents of the report.

3. Recruitment and retention

3.1 Recruitment and retention improvement journey in numbers

- Vacancies have been reducing from a significant high in July 2022 of 15.6% to 8.9% in February 2024.
- In February 2024, nursing and midwifery vacancies were at 8.5% and medical vacancies were at 7.6%.

3.1.2 Activity and initiatives

- The Trust has been running international nursing recruitment programmes, with 360 placed in 2023, while continuing to recruit newly qualified nurses and midwives from mid and south Essex.
- The Trust continues to promote staff within the organisation in roles including healthcare assistants (HCAs) and training nurse associates via its nursing apprenticeship route.
- For the employees on the Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship (top up), 29 qualified as registered nurses in October 2023. There are 29 due to qualify in September/October 2024 and 27 due to qualify in October 2025. There are ten staff who are due to qualify as a registered nurse in August 2025 from the Registered Nurse Degree Apprenticeship (a four-year course).
- 99 healthcare assistants are currently on their trainee nursing associate apprenticeship to become a nursing associate once they complete the two-year course.

- There is now a dedicated recruitment and retention project for HCAs, with bulk recruitment events run every month. This has been supported by the Prince's Trust and the Trust's Anchor Programme to encourage members of the community to embark on a career within its hospitals. The new Jackson training suite opened in the Autumn to offer state-of-the-art dedicated training and induction. Over 90% of recruits are new to healthcare.
- The Trust runs regular events to fill estates and facilities vacancies which have had the highest vacancy rates for the past few years, again supported by the Prince's Trust and the Anchor Programme. A streamlined recruitment process has been brought in to speed up onboarding.
- A dedicated task force has been in place to recruit into medical vacancies with dedicated marketing and attraction tools to focus on hard-to-recruit areas. The recruitment team has been working with services to ensure that it creates attractive and appealing job design, and marketing the unique selling points of coming to live and work in Basildon, Broomfield and Southend.
- The Trust holds regular events to offer and encourage bank staff to join the organisation as a permanent member of staff.

3.2 Retention and turnover

- Turnover is showing a consistent downward trend from its high of 15.6% in July 2022 to 11.1% in February 2024.
- Between July 2022 and February 2024, turnover for midwifery fell from 19.1% to 7.9%, medical and dental fell from 17.5% to 13.1%, and nursing turnover fell to 8.8%.
- Medical and dental turnover remains above target and so is a priority for the Trust.

3.2.1 Retention initiatives and actions to enhance staff engagement

- The NHS Staff Survey carried out in October 2023 has shown some significant increases in engagement scores since the previous survey in October 2022. The Trust has moved from 41st most improved Trust in 2022 to 7th in 2023.
- Key areas of improvement included:
 - Enough staff at the organisation to do my job properly (up to 27% from 19%)
 - Achieve a good balance between work and home life (up to 53% from 46%)
 - Organisation is committed to helping balance work and home life (up to 42% from 36%)
 - Satisfied with level of pay (up to 24% from 18%)
 - Organisation takes positive action on health and well-being (up to 48% from 43%)
- Key areas of focus remain similar to the lower performing scores from last year:
 - If friend/relative needed treatment would be happy with standard of care provided by organisation
 - Would recommend organisation as place to work
 - Care of patients/service users is organisation's top priority
 - Feel organisation would address any concerns I raised
 - Teams within the organisation work well together to achieve objectives
- Medical staff are the most disengaged staff group, and so a dedicated programme is being designed to address this, and a specific medical engagement survey was commissioned.
- The Valuing Our People programme has been running for the past year and will continue into its second year. This was developed in direct response to the main issues raised by staff via listening events after the Staff Survey.
- A new Leadership and Management behaviours framework was launched in February 2024.
- The Trust continues with its strategy and plan to deliver the NHS People Promise.

3.3 Actions taken to improve retention mapped against the NHS People Promise

We are compassionate and inclusive:

- Five-year equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strategy in place

- Established Diversity Partners supporting recruitment panels for bands 7 and above
- Reciprocal mentoring programme completed with review of scope for its second year
- Theme of belonging captured in the Trust induction programme as well as patient stories
- Reviewed the Compassionate Leadership Programme against activities completed as part of the merger, integrating elements into the Team Health programme such as goals and performance, and compassionate leadership as part of leadership development, appraisal and the Just and Restorative Culture which was launched in October 2023
- The team is launching its Civility and Zero Tolerance to Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination programme, focusing on behaviours, civility and kindness

We are recognised and rewarded:

- Increased recognition through Monthly Values Awards to recognise teams and more individuals
- Harmonised long-service recognition and long service events held hosted by the Executive and Senior Leadership Team
- Pensions awareness sessions – partnered with Affinity Connect as the Trust's pension training provider. The team promotes the NHS offer on pensions alongside the Affinity information to give staff choice in provision and options for training and awareness
- Thank-you card packs for line managers launched in January 2024.

We work flexibly:

- Flexible working group established, with a dedicated intranet page, executive sponsor in place. Work has also started to review job designs in therapies and radiology to promote flexible working tools
- Safer rostering programme now underway led by senior nursing staff

We are always learning:

- Increased opportunities for development
- Launched a new online career centre providing access to thousands of courses and development resources
- Began the Always Learning Scholarship, allowing colleagues to apply for up to £3,000 for training and education
- Expanded the Trust's leadership and management training and apprenticeship offer and made it simpler to move between jobs within the Trust.

We each have a voice that counts:

- Monthly PULSE survey established, with over 1,500 responses since June 2023. The data forms part of the Trust's Team Health Key Lines of Enquiry for Trust Accountability Meetings. PULSE includes qualitative feedback on what is working well and what would make staff's experience even better
- Quarterly on-site listening stations
- Stay and Exit interviews
- Breakfast with the executives, meeting-free Fridays, drop-in sessions with the CEO, and senior managers' briefings
- Enhanced promotion of freedom to speak up.

We are a team:

- Team Health Faculty established – multi-disciplinary team approach to supporting teams and leadership capacity and capability to manage team health
- Team Health Hub established as part of Brilliant Teams improvement sprint
- Integration of Team Health Model into induction
- Medical engagement scale survey.

We are safe and healthy:

- Expanded the psychological support and resources for staff and enhanced promotion of the employee assistance programme and psychological support services
- Increased the wellbeing offer to include community pantries at each of the main hospital sites – staff have picked up more than 2,000 free food and toiletry products
- Introduced free tea and coffee for all teams, provided free emergency period products
- Issued more than 300 emergency financial support vouchers
- Launched My Lifestyle, a new staff benefits platform offering discounts at a wide range of stores including supermarkets
- Introduced a Trust-wide monthly Wellbeing Wednesday to encourage an ongoing focus on health and wellbeing across the organisation. On the third Wednesday of every month staff hear from a range of specialists on topics such as sleep, mental health, and menopause. They are able to participate in activities such as yoga, pet therapy and access our Wellbeing Wednesday podcast on a range of health topics.
- Refreshed the Trust's menopause programme and signed up for Henpicked accreditation.

3.4 The Trust's priorities over the next 12 months

- The Trust has made seven commitments to its staff:
 1. Embedding zero tolerance to bullying, harassment and discrimination
 2. Reducing pay errors and inequity
 3. Improving the working environment
 4. Prioritising wellbeing and development
 5. Improving communication and engagement
 6. Increasing recognition and organisational pride
 7. Improving leadership visibility

3.5 Oncology recruitment at Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

- The Trust currently employs 20 consultant roles in oncology across mid and south Essex, with 18 in post and two vacancies.
- Despite the national shortage of Consultant Oncologists, in the last 12 months the Trust has successfully recruited two Consultant posts to Southend, these have been previous registrars who live locally and returned to the Trust.
- In terms of pipelines for the two existing vacancies (Of which one is in colorectal cancer with a clinic at Southend and Broomfield, and one in lung cancer at Broomfield), a recruitment campaign is in place with the use of agency (BDI and Remedium to support with headhunting) however there have been multiple rounds of advertising, without success. One post (lung) is now being redesigned as a 70/ 30 university split post.
- In the meantime the gaps have been covered by bank locums and existing consultants working additional sessions, including weekend working.
- For 2024/25 the Trust has funded the equivalent of two additional consultant posts to support with capacity and long-term workforce planning (these have been worked as additional sessions by consultants to date as a cost pressure).
- Due to the ongoing shortage of medical workforce, the workforce skill mix is being reviewed for further alternatives to support consultants, including:
 - Three posts for overseas doctors (MTI) have been recruited and are due to start in April. These posts will support with some work to offset consultant workload, including radiotherapy planning
 - Clinical Nurse Specialist and Advance Care Practitioner roles are being reviewed to support with medical capacity, such as follow-up clinics
 - The department is currently reviewing suitably trained staff to release from current establishments to train and would then backfill. Funding to train staff is being reviewed.
 - Opportunity for a joint consultant post with a London trust
 - Previously used British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, which can be explored further.

- A strategy session is being held with the oncology consultants to review the oncology strategy and in line with this design the workforce plan and skill mix for 2024/25 to ensure supply of staff and longer term resilience.
- In addition the capacity and demand model has been reviewed which indicates that a further four to six consultants are needed to meet new patient demand. This is subject to funding and in line with the shortage occupation and would need further consideration as part of the workforce plan.

A Southend Hospital colorectal consultant is on maternity leave until November 2024, and a registrar locum has been recruited to start in May to offset the gap partially.