

Internal Audit



Early Careers and Apprenticeships

June 2020

Internal Audit Assurance assessment:

Objective Seven	Objective Eight
Significant Assurance	Significant Assurance

Timetable

Date closing meeting held: No meeting held, client responded directly to the draft report

Date draft report issued: 26 May 2020

Date management comments received: 11 June 2020

Date Final report issued: 11 June 2020

Date presented to Audit and Risk Committee: 22 June 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scottish Government committed to reducing youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. Alongside this commitment NHS Lothian have recognised that their workforce is aging and there is a need for continued focus on the recruitment of younger people to careers in the NHS. From April 2017 NHS Lothian was required to pay an annual levy to support the Government Apprenticeship Programme. For NHS Lothian this equates to £3.62 million per annum. NHS Lothian can recoup value from the apprenticeship levy by accessing education in the form of apprenticeships.
- 1.2 Apprenticeships are designed to support the organisation's workforce development objectives to deliver high quality care whilst providing the learner with skills, qualifications and ambition to succeed in their role and progress to the next level. Apprenticeships are a means to ensuring that workforce can be attracted and retained by providing a wider and deeper talent pool.
- 1.3 The Early Careers and Apprenticeship Delivery Plan 2017-2019 has been developed into three core themes:
- to ensure that early career routes and apprenticeships are embedded in the workforce strategy;
 - that there is a high level of service and managerial commitment; and
 - there are effective learning programmes and processes in place.
- 1.4 The detailed delivery plan sets out how these aims will be achieved. Progress against the plan is reported to the Workforce Planning & Development Programme Board which in turn feeds into the Staff Governance Committee. The strategy for employing young people and apprenticeships is planned to be embedded within the Workforce Plan which is currently under revision.

Scope

- 1.4 We reviewed the Early Careers and Apprenticeship Action Plan to ensure progress has been made against actions as intended. Additionally, we also considered how progress has been reported and monitored, including what outcomes from the framework have been achieved to demonstrate the activity results in a positive contribution to NHS Lothian. We also considered how front-line staff, who are responsible for line managing those hired into apprenticeships or other schemes under the framework are engaged with and supported during the process through holding interviews with staff.

Acknowledgements

- 1.5 We would like to thank all staff consulted during this review for their assistance and cooperation.

2. Executive Summary

Summary of Findings

2.1 The table below summarises our assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls in place to meet each of the objectives agreed for this audit. Definitions of the ratings applied to each action are set out in Appendix 3.

No.	Control Objectives	Assurance Level	Number of Findings			
			Critical	High	Medium	Low
1	Progress against the Action Plan is monitored and reported to the Workforce Planning and Development Board and the Staff Governance Committee, with outcomes measured	Significant Assurance	-	-	-	-
2	There is a positive attitude towards early careers and apprenticeships from front line staff, with adequate support provided	Significant Assurance	-	-	-	-
Total			-	-	-	-

Conclusion

- 2.2 Good progress has been made against the actions recorded in the Early Careers and Apprenticeship Action Plan, which has been reported to the Workforce Planning & Development Programme Board and Staff Governance Committee. Also, training and support for front line staff has been made available by staff within the Workforce Development, Corporate Education & Training team, which supports a positive approach to the programme by staff.

Main findings

- 2.5 Progress against the delivery of the Early Careers and Apprenticeship Delivery plan has been good. The most recent update was made to the Workforce Planning & Development Programme Board on the 21 August 2019, where only three of the 58 actions (0.06%) included in the plan were ongoing. Staff have also been able to report a year-on-year increase in the offers made to apprentices.
- 2.6 Staff are being prepared for the role of apprentice mentorship through the delivery of training and presentations. Feedback is requested following training sessions and the information used to assess the overall experience of all those that are engaged in the delivery of the modern apprenticeship programme. Staff are being presented with examples of effective mentoring, emphasising the importance in highlighting positive behaviour as well as escalating areas of difficulty.

3. Management Action Plan

Control objective 1: Progress against the Action Plan is monitored and reported to the Workforce Planning and Development Board and the Staff Governance Committee, with outcomes measured

We identified no significant weaknesses in relation to the above control objective.

We reviewed the version of the Action Plan presented to the Workforce Planning & Delivery Board meeting on the 8 November 2018. It was noted by the Board that there had been significant progress with the delivery of the Early Careers and Apprenticeship Delivery plan. A further update was made on the 21 August 2019 where further demonstrable progress was reported.

The Action Plan consists of 18 objectives under the following three headings:

- Embed apprenticeships in the Organisation's workforce strategy;
- Establish service and managerial commitment
- Develop effective learning programmes and processes

58 Separate actions had been assigned across the 18 objectives. We selected 24 actions across 12 objectives, reviewing evidence to support those actions that had been reported to the Board as established. Of the 24 actions, the evidence provided was sufficient in confirming 23 had been completed. The remaining action, 'to develop a managers' area on HR Online to act as a live resource for up to date information on apprenticeships, and how to progress them' has been put back until the HR Online pages are updated later this year. In the meantime, managers and mentors are able to access information within a shared drive.

The August 2019 update to the Workforce Planning & Delivery Programme Board also included a paper reporting the number of apprentices in place, both completed and in progress. These figures were broken down across Nursing, AHP, Estates & Facilities, Business & Admin and Healthcare Science. Staff have been able to report a year-on-year increase in the offers made to apprentices.

Minutes from the Workforce Planning & Delivery Board meetings are being presented to the Staff Governance Committee.

Control objective 2: There is a positive attitude towards early careers and apprenticeships from front line staff, with adequate support provided

We identified no significant weaknesses in relation to the above control objective.

The Action Plan includes the specific objective:

- There will be a structured approach to apprentice support in the practise area with a dedicated 'Apprenticeship Partner' assigned to provide mentorship. Apprenticeship partners will be able to access specific training for this role.

Established actions in achieving this target include:

- We will promote the organisational value of 'apprentice partner' role in early leadership/facilitation of learning development.
- We will develop training that enables 'apprenticeship partners' to successfully support young people in the transition and journey into early career roles within NHSL.
- We will develop information on the role within managers HR Online pages.

These actions have been reported to the Workforce Planning & Delivery Programme Board as complete, with evidence provided on request to support the reporting.

For example, staff are being prepared for the role of apprentice mentorship through the delivery of training and presentations. Feedback is requested following training sessions and the information used to assess the overall experience of all those that are engaged in the delivery of the modern apprenticeship programme.

These training sessions include examples of effective mentoring, emphasising the importance in highlighting positive behaviour as well as escalating areas of difficulty.

Review of 41 returned mentor training surveys identified 38 individuals who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am aware of the support mechanisms in place for mentors". With the same number feeling more informed and confident in supporting young people through the apprenticeship programme after receiving the training.

4. Internal Audit Follow-up Process

- 4.1 Approximately two weeks following issue of the final Internal Audit report, a member of the Audit Team will issue an 'evidence requirements' document for those reports where management actions have been agreed.
- 4.2 This document forms part of the follow up process and records what information should be provided to close off the management action.
- 4.3 The follow-up process is aligned with the meetings of the Board's Audit & Risk Committee. Audit Sponsors will be contacted on a quarterly basis with a request to provide the necessary evidence for those management actions that are likely to fall due before the next meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Appendix 1 – Staff Involved and Documents Reviewed

Staff Involved

- Associate Director OD & Learning
- Corporate Education Lead
- Early Careers Project Support Manager

Documents Reviewed

- Workforce Planning & Development Programme Board minutes
- Staff Governance Committee minutes
- Apprenticeship Delivery Plan update – November 2018
- WPDPB Early Careers Update November 2018 – August 2019
- Training and presentation information (emails, invitations, lists of attendee, powerpoint presentations and attendee feedback).
- Numerous documents and emails provided by staff in support of the closed actions.

Appendix 2 - Definition of Ratings

Findings and management actions ratings

Finding Ratings	Definition
Critical	A fundamental failure or absence in the design or operating effectiveness of controls, which requires immediate attention
High	A key control failure has been identified which could be either due to a failure in the design or operating effectiveness. There are no compensating controls in place, and management should aim to implement controls within a calendar month of the review.
Medium	A control failure has been identified which could be either due to a failure in the design or operating effectiveness. Other controls in place partially mitigate the risk to the organisation, however management should look to implement controls to fully cover the risk identified.
Low	Minor non-compliance has been identified with the operating effectiveness of a control, however the design of the control is effective

Report ratings and overall assurance provided

Report Ratings	Definition	When Internal Audit will award this level
No assurance	The Board cannot take any assurance from the audit findings. There remains a significant amount of residual risk.	The controls are not adequately designed and / or operating effectively and immediate management action is required as there remains a significant amount of residual risk (for instance one Critical finding or a number of High findings)
Limited assurance	The Board can take some assurance from the systems of control in place to achieve the control objective, but there remains a significant amount of residual risk which requires action to be taken.	<p>This may be used when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are known material weaknesses in key control areas. • It is known that there will have to be changes that are relevant to the control objective (e.g. due to a change in the law) and the impact has not been assessed and planned for. <p>The controls are deficient in some aspects and require management action (for instance one 'high' finding and a number of other lower rated findings)</p>
Moderate assurance	The Board can take reasonable assurance that controls upon which the organisation relies to achieve the control objective are in the main suitably designed and effectively applied. There remains a moderate amount of residual risk.	<p>In most respects the "purpose" is being achieved. There are some areas where further action is required, and the residual risk is greater than "insignificant".</p> <p>The controls are largely effective and in most respects achieve their purpose with a limited number of findings which require management action (for instance a mix of 'medium' findings and 'low' findings)</p>
Significant assurance	<p>The Board can take reasonable assurance that the system(s) of control achieves or will achieve the control objective.</p> <p>There may be an insignificant amount of residual risk or none at all.</p>	<p>There is little evidence of system failure and the system appears to be robust and sustainable.</p> <p>The controls adequately mitigate the risk, or weaknesses are only minor (for instance a low number of findings which are all rated as 'low' or no findings)</p>