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| Report title                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | People and Organisational Development (OD) Directorate Highlight Report                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |  |
| Author                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Suzanne Hartshorne, Deputy Director of People and Organisational Development<br>Dawn Adams, Associate Director of People Development                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |  |
| Accountable Director                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Director of People and Organisational Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |  |
| Lead Board Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | People Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |  |
| Previous groups                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | People and Culture Group, 20 August 2026<br>People Committee, 1 September 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |
| Recommended action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Assurance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |  |
| Purpose of the paper                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | The report provides a brief overview of the highlights, lowlights, and risks within the People and OD Directorate.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |  |
| Executive Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |
| <p>The Directorate continues to mitigate the four people-related Board Assurance Framework risks: culture, health and wellbeing, recruitment and retention, and leadership and development.</p> <p>Cultural work is progressing through YAS Together, the NHS Staff Standards self-assessment and local action from the 2025 Staff Survey. Diversity metrics have generally improved, sexual safety processes are starting to embed, and employee relations governance remains stable, although inclusive recruitment, bullying and harassment, career progression and Employment Tribunal activity require continued attention.</p> <p>Sickness absence reduced from 7.9% to 7.7% but remains above the 7.1% target. Short-, medium- and long-term interventions are overseen by the Absence Reduction Delivery Group, including strengthened case scrutiny, alternative duties, manager training and Quality Improvement testing; measurable impact is not yet evident. Recruitment is broadly aligned to the workforce plan, with 96% of establishment filled and 7.7% turnover, but vacancies in Integrated Urgent Care and the Emergency Operations Centre, high Integrated Urgent Care turnover and paramedic recruitment outcomes remain priorities. Bank-worker governance is being strengthened.</p> <p>Appraisal quality is strong, but compliance is 86.4% against the 90% target; essential learning is 86.0%. Apprentices comprise 7.6% of the workforce, although delayed completions present workforce and financial risks. Overall, the programme is extensive and appropriately governed, but sustained delivery and demonstrable improvement are required to reduce the identified risks.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |
| Recommendation(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | The Trust Board are asked to note the contents of the paper                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |  |
| Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks (board and board assurance committees only)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <div>6. Develop and sustain an open and positive workplace culture.</div> <div>7. Support staff health and well-being effectively.</div> <div>8. Deliver and sustain improvements in recruitment and retention.</div> <div>9. Develop and sustain improvements in leadership and staff training and development.</div> |  |  |

# People and Organisational Development Directorate

## Highlight Report

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper aims to update the Board on the key achievements, and ongoing work, of the People and Organisational Development Directorate, focusing on mitigating four principal risks from the Board Assurance Framework.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The NHS People Plan sets out the agenda, which supports how the NHS workforce can enable improvement of the patient experience. The Trust Strategy 'Great Care, Great People, Great Partner' supports the NHS People Plan and has a bold ambition 'Our People', that guides our work locally. These plans guide the Directorate as well as the day-to-day operations of leadership of an ambulance workforce.
- 2.2 The Board Assurance Framework (BAF) identifies four main risks linked to the Our People ambition, guiding the Directorate to address and resolve them. The four risks are:

#6 Ability to develop and sustain an open and positive workplace culture.

#7 Ability to support staff health and well-being effectively.

#8 Ability to deliver and sustain improvements in recruitment and retention.

#9 Ability to deliver and sustain improvements in leadership and staff training and development.

### 3.0 PEOPLE AND OD DIRECTORATE HIGHLIGHTS

- 3.1 The following sets out the key highlights of the directorate's work to mitigate and reduce the BAF risks.

#### **#6 Ability to develop and sustain an open and positive workplace culture.**

- **YAS Together** is focused on strengthening staff voice, embedding the Trust's behavioural framework, promoting psychological safety and supporting inclusive leadership through initiatives such as the Anti-Racism Charter and a new cultural awareness programme. Emphasis is being placed on ensuring operational colleagues are actively involved in shaping improvement priorities through engagement events, equality support networks and co-production approaches. The programme is strongly aligned to the new NHS Staff Standards, including a focus on flexible working and staff experience. Overall, the cultural change programme remains on track to support the Trust's ambition of being a high-performing, inclusive and compassionate organisation.
- **NHS Staff Standards:** Launched on 6 July 2026, an evidence-based self-assessment of YAS performance against the published employee experience standards has been completed with subject matter experts and YAS Together Executive Leads. Metrics are included in the National Oversight Framework. Current alignment is positive with areas for improvement already part of existing development plans and included in the YAS Together 2026/27 priorities.
- **NHS Staff Survey:** The 2025 results have been shared across organisational forums and directorates, supported by enhanced Business Intelligence reporting and analysis of sexual safety, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, and race equality. Teams are using the findings to agree measurable local actions, with priorities

including staff influence on decisions, workload, safety and wellbeing, career pathways, appraisal quality and development opportunities. The 2026 survey will run from 5 October to 30 November; the Trust Executive Group has approved protected time and individual, team and prize-draw incentives, with equitable access for operational teams, to support the aim of matching or exceeding the 66% response rate achieved in 2025.

- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Workforce Race and Disability Equality Standards data was submitted by the statutory deadline, with improvement across most metrics. Priorities remain inclusive recruitment, bullying, harassment and abuse, and career progression. Equality Support Networks continue to support the programme through leadership activity, station visits, cultural events and resources, including HQ Pride and improved automated membership processes. The Trust has adopted the Race and Health Observatory's Seven Anti-Racism Principles and the Government definition of Anti-Muslim Hostility. The response to the Lord Mann Review and related NHS England actions is informing further work, including support resources, case studies and the planned rollout of cultural-awareness activity across the Trust.
- **Sexual Safety:** The Trust continues to embed arrangements for managing sexual safety concerns into business as usual. Further work is focused on supporting all parties after formal processes have concluded, informed by learning from completed cases. The communications approach is also developing to share anonymised staff experiences safely and appropriately. Case studies have been prepared and will be shared across the Trust on a phased basis.
- **Employee Relations** activity remains broadly stable and comparable with other ambulance services. The Professional Standards Panel provides oversight of key workforce decisions, and learning from disciplinary, sexual safety and recruitment cases is informing process and risk-management improvements. Employment Tribunal activity remains a significant focus, although successfully defended cases provide assurance on decision-making and case management. Improvement work prioritises earlier resolution, partnership working, legislative readiness, staff experience, fairness and accountability.

#### **#7 Ability to support staff health and well-being effectively.**

- **Sickness Absence:** The Trust's sickness absence rate improved slightly from 7.9% in July 2026 to 7.7% in August but remains above the 7.1% target and continues to be a key Trust priority. The Absence Reduction Delivery Group provides governance, coordination and challenge across the short-, medium- and long-term programme. Immediate action is strengthening case oversight and manager support; medium-term work is progressing alternative duties, prevention and recovery training, workplace adjustments and reporting improvements; and longer-term Quality Improvement tests and strategic changes are being developed through data analysis, staff engagement and stakeholder workshops. Progress includes the establishment of the temporary Human Resources-led task force, which will identify barriers to case progression and support consistent application of the Attendance Management Policy; substantial completion of the Alternative Duties application and user testing ahead of governance approval; and development of manager training in response to feedback on access to advice, practical wellbeing support, compassionate conversations, conflict support and clearer resources. Quality Improvement tests continue to progress, although measurable impact on absence has not yet been demonstrated.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Delivery of the 2026/27 plan remains on track. Following approval of the business case, work is under way to extend the Occupational Health contract and bring occupational immunisations in-house by April 2027. Referral quality, appropriateness, cancellation costs and contract performance

continue to be addressed through manager engagement and strengthened contract management.

## **#8 Ability to deliver and sustain improvements in recruitment and retention.**

- **Recruitment and retention:** Recruitment remains strong for Remote Patient Care, Ambulance Support Workers and Paramedic programmes, with clear alignment to the Trust workforce plan. Although the Trust is at 96% establishment, vacancies remain high in certain areas. Integrated Urgent Care has a vacancy rate of 7.7% and the Emergency Operations Centre 10.4%, while 999 Operations is 0.7% above establishment. The overall Trust vacancy rate was 4% in August 2026, with FTE in post at 96%. Trust turnover remains stable at 7.7%, although IUC turnover remains high at 20.2%. Assurance is provided through routine monitoring of workforce trajectories, turnover and vacancies, with targeted action where service-level risks arise. Current priorities include reducing IUC turnover, reviewing paramedic recruitment and university partnerships, and assessing EOC call-handling capacity through workforce planning and recovery arrangements. Progress is monitored through executive performance, business planning and BAF governance.
- **External Paramedic Recruitment:** A revised workforce requirement of 66–92 external paramedics has been approved, reduced from 150. A strengthened recruitment and selection process, including electrocardiogram (ECG) interpretation, a clinical skills assessment and a values-based interview, has resulted in lower-than-anticipated pass rates. Resit opportunities have been offered for the knowledge and skills elements, with 60 conditional offers made, representing 24% of applicants. Further recruitment activity is underway, and 80 offers are expected in total. Six meetings have taken place with higher education institution (HEI) partners to discuss the results, support for unsuccessful graduates and programme enhancements to improve readiness for practice. A lessons-learned review of the new process is under way, using a Quality Improvement (QI) approach to evaluate the process and inform future campaigns.
- **Bank workers:** To address the corporate risk relating to the management of bank workers, a dedicated working group has been established to review the Trust's current processes and procedures. This includes undertaking an audit of bank worker activity and compliance with Statutory and Mandatory Training requirements to identify inactive or non-compliant individuals. The group is considering appropriate interventions, including targeted support to improve compliance where possible and the removal of bank workers from the register where requirements continue to be unmet. In parallel, the working group is reviewing recruitment and exit processes and assessing the potential implications of the Government's planned introduction of guaranteed hours for zero-hours workers. This work will ensure the Trust has robust, legally compliant and effective arrangements in place for the management of its bank workforce, while mitigating the identified corporate risk.

## **#9 Ability to deliver and sustain improvements in leadership and staff training and development.**

- **Appraisal and Career Conversations Quality:** YAS appraisal quality remains strong, with an average 2025/26 rating of 8.9/10, consistent with the previous year. The National NHS Staff Survey appraisal score increased from 4.0 to 4.3, placing YAS top of sector for the second year running. Staff satisfaction is high for preparation, environment, time, manager support, and quality of conversation, with scores around 89–90%. Improvement areas remain as appraisals need to better support job improvement, clear objective-setting, and feeling valued. The

Appraisal Audit 2025 has led to updates in policy, templates, notifications, training, quality assurance, reporting, and escalation processes. Next steps focus on promoting quality resources, increasing survey responses, supporting managers, and reducing capacity barriers to meaningful appraisal conversations.

- **Appraisal and Career Conversation Compliance:** overall compliance rates are below the 90% target and show a downward trend since April 2026 at 86.4% at the end of August (86.8% July). Appraisal completions remain a focus for performance review meetings and process changes agreed in response to feedback; 11-month window and all appraisals open from September to enable smoothing of peaks in appraisal activity. The Senior Leadership Community appraisal window ran April-June with 95.0% completion (as of 16 September, 10 outstanding).
- **Essential Learning Oversight Group (ELOG):** Essential learning compliance improved slightly to 86.0% in August 2026, from 85.8% in July. This is below the 90% target and reflects the revised TEG agreed bundle of statutory and mandatory training for 2026/27. This includes face-to-face training on an annual and 2-year rollout cycle and eLearning. A key priority for this transition year, as publication of the new National Mandated Skills Framework is awaited and the new nationally mandated learning is developed for release in April 2027, is a critical review of all locally mandated statutory and mandatory learning. Adopting the approach used for the national review, a three-stage Gateway process is being applied. Subject Matter Experts have been engaged and asked to submit gateway proposal for learning they wish to continue in 2027/28.
- **Apprenticeships:** As of the end of August 2026, apprentices represented 7.6% of the workforce, slightly below 7.9% in July 2026. We have been nominated as a regional finalist in the National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards 2026. A key priority remains reducing the number of apprentices beyond their planned end date; the introduction of an Apprenticeship Support Lead role will provide targeted support for apprentices at risk of delayed completion, coordinating interventions, SEND support, and reasonable adjustments. This role will strengthen learner support within YAS Academy, improve timely achievement rates, and ensure a fair and consistent approach to apprentice management while protecting the Trust's funding and regulatory compliance

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The work of the Directorate aims to reduce the risks set out in the Board Assurance Framework as well as meet the Trust's bold ambitions and NHS People Plan.
- 4.2 We are committed to improving the staff experience to ensure our patients get the 'Best Care' possible. We know that there is much more we can do to ensure they come to work and give their best on every shift. The above work demonstrates our work programme is extensive and wide-ranging, and we will strive to ensure that our people can thrive at every opportunity.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATION

The Trust Board are asked to note the contents of the paper.

## People and OD Directorate - Risks aligned to the People Committee

| Key issues/Risks to address                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Actions implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Further actions to be undertaken                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| Sickness absence has improved slightly but remains above the 7.1% Trust target, creating a continuing risk to workforce availability, service resilience and the Trust's ability to meet patient demand.                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Absence Reduction Delivery Group, co-chaired by the Deputy Director of People and OD and the Associate Director of Quality Improvement and Safety, includes senior leaders from all operational areas to proactively manage plans.</li> <li>The Priority 3 workstreams are progressing well, with project management office (PMO)-supported plans on track for delivery.</li> <li>The 4 QI-led projects arising from the listening exercise that took place in March 2026, are in test and learn phases; Leadership and Culture, Mental health and wellbeing, Moving and Handling, MSK and Physical Health, Data, Systems and Process Enablement.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A temporary HR-led absence task force is being introduced to strengthen oversight and support managers with cases where progression appears limited. It will identify whether delays reflect justified circumstances or process gaps, promote consistent application of the Attendance Management Policy and support cases to move to the appropriate review point, including final attendance hearings where required.</li> <li>The Alternative Duties platform is undergoing User Acceptance Testing for a 'soft' release in September 2026.</li> <li>The Attendance Management Policy is under review to ensure absence is being robustly managed with a clear process. The review will consider learning from the manager workshops held as part of the QI-led absence programme of work.</li> <li>A review of recording absence on Trust systems is taking place to ensure this is efficient, without duplication of data.</li> </ul> |
| Number of apprentices past their planned end date continues to be above the 15% threshold monitored by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, resulting in staff not progressing through the workforce pipeline and a financial risk of levy clawback. The position is 43.75% for Ambulance Support Worker (ASW) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BI dashboard of individual apprentice performance against expected completion.</li> <li>Implemented revised progress measures with apprentices put at risk of withdrawal for lack of progress, staged supportive process.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Apprenticeship Management SOP on approval.</li> <li>Use learning from the in-house dyslexia assessor capability to support learners with Special Educational Needs And Disabilities (SEND) and reduce reliance on external provision.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

| Key issues/Risks to address                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Actions implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Further actions to be undertaken                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| <p>apprentices (n=49) and 51.79% for Associate Ambulance Practitioner (AAP) apprentices (n=20).</p> <p>43.75% ASW apprentices (n=49)<br/>51.79% AAP apprentices (n=20)<br/>(as of 16/09/2026)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring of all apprentices on new extended programmes (ASW &amp; AAP) to early identify any issues.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a review of SEND resource requirements to strengthen support for learners, optimise in-house expertise and capacity, and reduce reliance on external provision where appropriate.</li> <li>Progress Apprenticeship Support Lead post and local area leads.</li> <li>Operationalise Apprenticeship Management SOP</li> </ul>                                                                                          |
| <p>The Trust lacks systematic approach to managing bank staff including the recruitment, management, and leavers processes. Whilst the potential risks are to essential learning compliance and the implications for health and safety, safeguarding and clinical care overall. There are also risks to employment rights, regulatory compliance, clinical care and patient safety.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicated entitlement for Statutory Sick Pay from 6 April, new entitlement also applies to bank workers.</li> <li>Monitoring introduction of the Employment Rights Act (ERA) 2025 and identified the impact on Trust HR policies.</li> <li>Created plan for updating all HR policies.</li> <li>Inactive bank workers have been identified in the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) and Global Rostering System (GRS) in preparation for removing inactive workers.</li> </ul>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to monitor introduction of ERA in 2026/27 and reflect changes in Trust policies and processes.</li> <li>To identify bank workers not compliant with essential learning and work with 999 managers to agree next steps.</li> <li>Work with departments to identify future requirements for bank workers, including workforce volume, activity and statutory and mandatory training compliance requirements.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Employment Tribunals are significantly high, which brings risks regarding Trust reputation, financial risk due to increased legal fees.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provisions have been made in the Trust accounts to be able fund increased legal fees and potential awards.</li> <li>Cases have clear direction and monitoring from Hill Dickinson.</li> <li>A Disciplinary improvement plan is being progressed to support learning from cases, and quality of processes.</li> <li>Given the significant number of cases that relate to disability discrimination, work to support workplace adjustments and alternative duties are part of the sickness absence work</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work on workplace adjustments under Priority 3 in the Trust business plan continues and is on track for delivery.</li> <li>Learning from 3 successfully defended cases will be incorporated into our approach going forwards.</li> <li>The Absence Reduction work programme is progressing with a training workstream to ensure managers are compassionate in their approach, whilst robustly managing absence.</li> </ul>     |