

People Strategy

2021/2026



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Foreword

When we set out to produce our Organisational Strategy back in February 2020, little did we know that we were on the verge of a global pandemic.

Never in the history of the NHS has the demand for our services been so high, or the appreciation of the work of all our staff by the public been so great. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic we have seen more change take place both across our organisation and around it than at any other point in the last 70 years; more challenge about how we deliver our services and more agility shown in our ability to respond to that need for change. What we have achieved has been down to the ability and commitment of our people.

The People Strategy that follows reflects this new emphasis on being a people-focussed organisation: one that places our workforce, as much as our service users, front and centre of everything we do. There is a rich evidence base supporting our intention to invest in our people; liberating and utilising them as our most valuable assets and developing a culture which enables everyone to learn, achieve and sustain excellence in all areas of our work.

I am keen to hear the views and opinions of our staff.

Already, I know that many of you have taken the opportunity to make your voice heard. The response rate to our Staff Survey 2020 has surpassed those achieved in previous years and I am committed to using this feedback to help us make informed decisions in order to create the best place to work that we can and in doing so, enable us to meet our overall goal of providing outstanding care for our patients and their families.

The pandemic has changed us and is shaping us even now; there is no doubt that bold decisions will continue to need to be made and that more change is on the way. I am certain that learning from our recent experiences will help make us stronger, more capable, and able to build on the foundations that we have already begun to lay. Reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement, I want us all to become more comfortable with change, knowing that in change lies the potential for our growth in so many ways.



“The People Strategy that follows reflects this new emphasis on being a ‘can do’ organisation.”

DR SUSAN GILBY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER

I hope you agree that this People Strategy provides clarity about the ambitions we see the Trust achieving over the next 5 years. We have already begun to action these so as to make a real difference for everyone. However, we can only turn these ambitions in to reality with your input and

willingness to get involved. 2020 was a year unlike any other, but as we move forwards I feel we can do so with a sense of excitement of what we can achieve together.

Susan Gilby
Chief Executive Officer



“We are 1.3m strong.
We are all walks of life, all
kinds of experiences.
We are the NHS”.

**OUR NHS PEOPLE
PROMISE**

Introduction

This People Strategy has been developed to support the delivery of the Countess of Chester Hospital's Organisational Strategy 2021 – 2026 which sets out the challenges, risks and opportunities faced by the Trust and how we intend to respond to them.

This is an enabling strategy that describes how as a Trust, we intend to respond to those challenges, risks and opportunities as they relate to our people and includes our plans for action. It also describes the way in which our people will be supported and developed to give the best possible service to our patients and the wider communities we serve.

The Countess of Chester employs 5700 staff (including temporary bank staff)

As an employer, we have a fundamental duty of care to support our employees and volunteers to deliver their roles safely and to the best of their ability; this means that team leaders and managers have to sharpen their focus on meeting the core needs¹ of their people, by ensuring they provide sustained motivation to help them deal with a constantly changing environment. This strategy outlines how we aim to do this.

2020 brought the personal



consisting of a wide range of medical; clinical; scientific; technical; professional; admin and clerical workers. The trust also has around 150 volunteers.

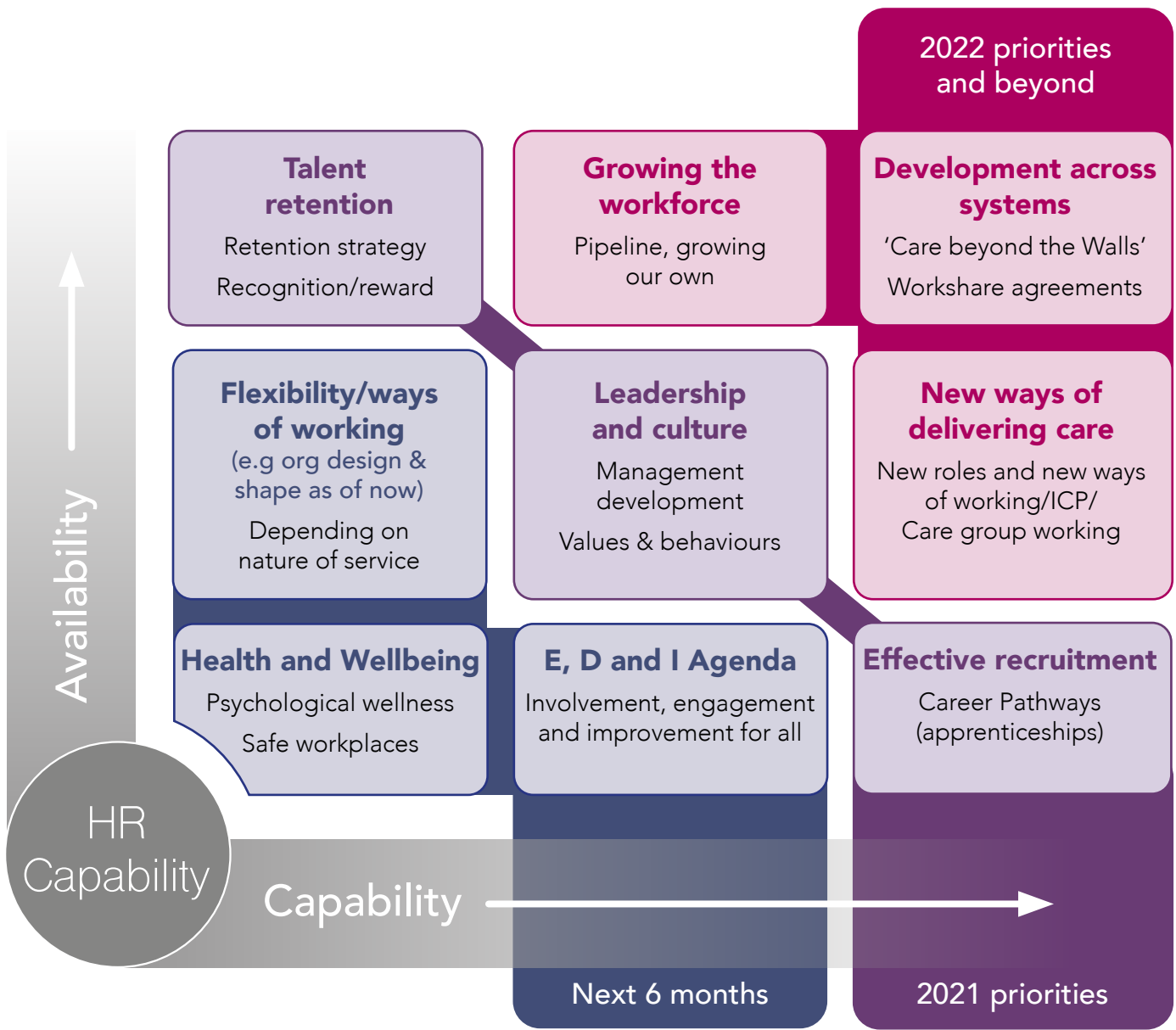
and collective efforts of NHS staff to the forefront in the management of Covid-19, and there was universal acknowledgement that the commitment of the

NHS workforce was to be celebrated and valued. In July 2020, NHS England launched its People Plan and accompanying People Promise. The themes and words that make up this Promise have come from those who work in the NHS.

People in different healthcare roles and organisations have

made it clear what matters most to them, and what would make the greatest difference in improving their experience in the workplace. The intention is that this is what all staff should all be able to say about working in the NHS, by 2024. The Countess pledges to work to make these ambitions a reality.

Strategy on a page



About us, our staff and Freedom to Speak up.

About us

We serve a population of over 416,000 residents mainly in the Chester and surrounding rural areas including Ellesmere Port, Neston and Flintshire

On average every year:

- 500,000 patients attend the Trust
- 77,891 A&E attendances
- 75,195 outpatient clinics held

Our staff

- We employ around 5700 staff (including temporary bank staff)
- 10% of our staff belong to black, or minority ethnic background compared to a BAME population within CW&C of 6.1%



MEMBERS OF STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

572 Medical and Dental, 1306 Registered Nursing & Midwifery, 2137 AHP/ Prof Scientific & Technical/Clinical Services, 1680 Non-clinical Professional, Administrative & Ancillary and 150 Volunteers²

Freedom to Speak Up

We support our Staff to speak up to improve patient safety and create a Workplace that cultivates an open and transparent culture where every member of staff is able to raise their concerns safely, and ensure action is taken to resolve issues quickly and effectively.

Our vision

Our Trust vision states “We will improve the lives of our community and provide excellence in health and care, through partnership and innovation”

Our Organisational Strategy has been developed to steer the achievement of the vision and reflects the changes we need to make to deliver excellent and safe care in the future. Our people who will be delivering these services (both directly and indirectly) need and deserve our utmost commitment in supporting them to make this change to ensure we deliver the right care in the right place at the right time.

We are aiming to become expert in recruiting, leading, motivating, developing and releasing staff across the local population. We wish to benefit from having an expert clinical workforce and to be among the best places to work where our staff report a positive employment experience that will make other healthcare professionals want to join us.

By 2025, system design will have been driven by the implementation of the Cheshire West Local Plan, of which we are a co-author and co-owner. It is likely that secondary healthcare provision in West Cheshire and Cheshire

will have been reorganised, and this will impact the shape of our workforce in many ways. We are committed to keeping our workforce informed of planned future service changes and involving them in their creation.

Our Values and Behaviours

As we reflect and adapt to the changes brought about by Covid-19, we will take the time to revisit our values and behaviours to ensure they continue to guide the way we do things here at the Trust.

Values

We are committed to being:

Safe

Avoiding harm and reducing risk to all.

Kind

Considerate and non-judgemental in thoughts and actions.

Effective

Consistently maximising resources to deliver excellent care.



Behaviours

We will:

- Work together to get the best outcomes for the patients and the Trust
- Show respect and fairness so that everyone feels like a valued member of the Trust
- Demonstrate a positive attitude to create a great environment for our patients, our colleagues and ourselves
- Strive to achieve excellence to continuously improve our care for patients, our people and our finances
- Lead people by creating an environment in which everyone can do the best job possible

Now as we find ourselves embracing new ways of working across all areas of the organisation, we want to ensure these long-held values remain relevant. We will do this by engaging with our staff, our patients and members of the public.



Where are we now?

The preliminary work to develop this strategy involved an extensive consultation exercise beginning with the Trust's executive leadership team.

This resulted in the development of a draft 'Strategy on a Page' (see page 6). This was shared with a range of our key stakeholders and their feedback has been used to inform where we need to prioritise our efforts over the next five years, namely in the areas of attracting and retaining the best people; developing people's personal and professional skills and knowledge throughout their careers; improving staff wellbeing and the staff experience.

The COCH workforce responded very positively to a range of challenges following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, and we aim to build on this experience. We want to ensure safe workspaces for staff wherever they are located, and we will continue to provide clear guidance to support them in their roles, including using tailored risk assessments.

Supporting flexible and agile working practices in caring services will be a challenge, requiring new equipment,

working in different locations and in different ways and requiring different skills sets. As part of our Digital & Data Strategy we are committed to supporting agile working practices for all our staff through continuous improvement in the use and understanding of technology. A revised approach to flexible working will support staff for whom work life balance is a challenge (1 in 5 members of the NHS workforce is also a family carer), and culturally a focus on outcomes and performance will increase with measures needing to be more clearly defined across a range of teams.

This People Strategy supports the principle aim of the Trust's Continuous Improvement Strategy in that each staff member should both 'do their work and improve it'. The Lean methodology is being introduced across the organisation so as to provide a process by which staff can systematically look to make improvements in quality and efficiency, by removing activities that don't add value. The success of the Continuous

Improvement Strategy will require the participation of a workforce which is well-led, well-informed and well-engaged.

It supports the intention for all members of our workforce to work together to deliver change in an empowered way, to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the services they are providing.

In support of our Clinical Strategy, we acknowledge that as an employer of a large workforce we are care partners as much as care providers and the opportunity to work in collaboration with other health and care organisations and at scale is significant.

We will deploy our workforce based on the most appropriate skillset for the need at hand, whilst maintaining safe and effective services. This is likely to impact on the design of many jobs, the location of roles and team configuration as we move into the future, but we recognise that those people that are closest to delivering services are well positioned to be involved in making these improvements happen, and be involved in service reconfiguration and consultation in a timely manner.

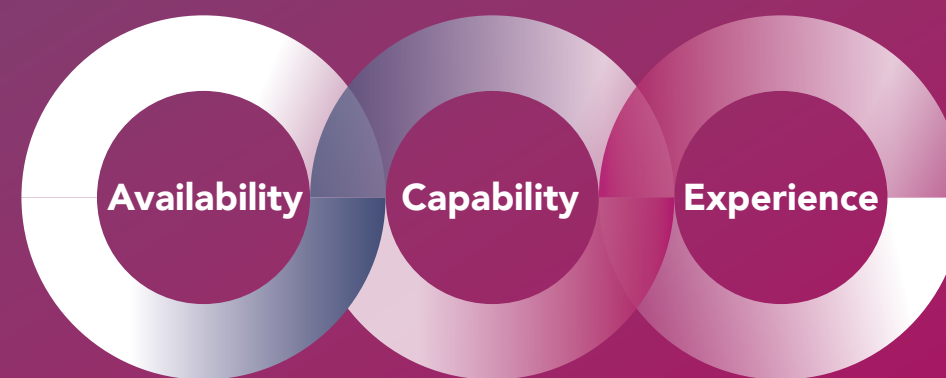


Our aims

Our Strategic People Aim is to

“Attract and retain talented people with the right skills and attitude to create a positive environment with a shared sense of pride and ambition for everyone.”

We will do this by focusing on 3 key areas:



Sustaining safe levels of staff **availability**.
Improving staff **capability**.
Curating a positive staff **experience**.

Key deliverables

Our three strategic people aims are sub divided in to nine key deliverables, each having clear measures of success.

The People Strategy will be led by the People and OD Directorate working closely with Divisions and key stakeholders who will develop their own People Plans which will specify what actions they plan to take year on year in order to contribute towards delivering the 9 key deliverables as they relate to their own priorities. We will measure and report progress on a regular basis to the Finance and Performance Committee and annually to the Unitary Board of Directors. Any necessary changes to plans will be incorporated

as soon as practicable, in order to ensure we remain 'on track' and that our action plans continue to support the delivery of the Organisational Strategy.

It is important to recognise that this Strategy is not wholly 'owned' by the People and Organisation Development Directorate. It is an organisational enabling strategy, the delivery of which is reliant on the contribution and efforts of ALL our people and led by ALL leaders and managers with COCH.

“During the un-precedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic It has become even more important that we have a clear sense of purpose about how we will address difficult issues so as to help ensure we maintain a stable and safe workforce that is skilled and capable of continuing to develop and deliver all of our services.”

**CHRIS HANNAH,
CHAIR**

“We are committed to attracting and retaining talented people who have the right skills and attitude to create a positive environment where everyone has a shared sense of pride and ambition.”

**ALYSON HALL,
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN
RESOURCES AND OD**



Strategic Aim: Availability

Sustaining safe levels of staff availability

Key Deliverables

1. Strategic workforce planning
This enables us to make the best use of our people and skills. We will ensure we have the right numbers of staff, with the right skills mix enabling us to reduce our dependency on agency staff and consequently improve the efficient use of our resources. We will also develop opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and volunteering to strengthen our position as an employer of choice and creating a pipeline of future employees. (links to NHSP5)
2. New ways of delivering care
We will embrace new ways of working to facilitate the delivery of our Clinical

- Strategy, as well as to enable us to utilise our estate to best effect. (links to NHSP1;2;4;5)
3. System collaboration
Sharing resources, working in a smarter way as required through development of place-based strategy, linked to local sector forward plans. We will work with our partners and other healthcare providers in developing and delivering new models of care. We will work to remove barriers to sharing staff across the system to ensure resources are effectively deployed where they are needed most. (links to NHSP1;4;6)

Success Measures

- Achieve a vacancy rate of 5% or less for Nurses and 10% or less for Medical and Dental
 - To fill 95% of all roster gaps through our own Bank
 - Continue with international recruitment for registered nurses
 - Improve our attraction to candidates from diverse backgrounds
- Achieve a year on year reduction on annual agency spend by 0.5% year on year bench marked against 2019/20
 - Maximise return on our investment of Apprenticeship levy
 - 75% of our apprentices successfully appointed and retained within the Trust
 - Staff attrition rates <10%
- (aspire 8%)
 - Sickness absence rates <6% (aspire to <4%)
 - Total number of active volunteers increased by 50% or total number of annual volunteer hours increased by 25% (based on 150 volunteers in 2019/20)

Strategic Aim: Capability

Improving staff capability

Key Deliverables

4. Education, training & development
We will work to develop a broad range of development opportunities for staff across all levels and professions within the Trust (links to NHSP4) at the highest standards possible in order to attract and retain the right people to work at COCH. We will empower our staff to help themselves to manage their learning and develop their careers by offering a range of blended learning approaches including coaching/mentoring; increased focus on digital learning; networking; internal and external courses and master-classes.
5. Leadership and line management
Building on existing potential to develop confident, capable and compassionate leaders and managers at all levels. We recognise that workforce health and wellbeing is an important element in supporting our levels of capability and maintaining the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff is vital for our success. (links to NHSP2;3)
6. Performance management
Ensure our people understand how they contribute to the corporate objectives of the Trust and work towards achieving excellence, utilising continuous improvement methods and effective performance management.

Success Measures

- All managers to successfully complete the Trust's leadership programme by 2023
 - Achieve a mandatory training compliance >90%
 - A 25% reduction in formal Employee Relations issues
 - Sickness absence rates
- <6% (aspire to <4%)
 - Develop an Integrated Personal Development Framework including assessment tools and career development pathways for all supervisory, management and leadership roles
- >80% of appraisals completed (aspire to 90%)
 - Attain upper quartile score for Appraisal quality in staff survey
 - Attain upper quartile score for Equality, Diversity and inclusivity in staff survey

Strategic Aim: Experience

Curating a positive staff experience

Key Deliverables

7. Staff engagement
Building on 'Your Voice Matters', we will develop new staff engagement approaches to listen and respond to staff issues and continue to implement our new Employee Relations Framework where staff feel they are listened to, valued, involved and informed and where everyone upholds the values and behaviours making the Countess of Chester Hospital a great place to work. We will also refresh our approach to staff recognition, linking performance and behaviour, in acknowledging the efforts and successes of our staff. (links to NHSP1;2;3)

8. Fair and equitable place to work
That is diverse, inclusive and respectful where staff are

recognised for their efforts, flexibility and commitment. Revisit our values and behaviours to ensure they continue to guide the way we do things here (links to NHSP1;2;3)

9. Safe working environment
Where 'Your Health Matters' and staff health and wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do, so that staff feel able to ask for support and have access to appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity. We will work to create an appropriate work-life balance for our staff through modern fit-for-purpose policies and procedures. We will develop a strategy promoting physical & psychological health & wellbeing (links to NHSP1)

Success Measures

- To be within top 10% of Trust's for our Staff Survey response rate by 2026
- Continuously develop and improve our Corporate Welcome Events to set expectations and drive culture change
- All Managers to be trained in recruitment, induction, development, communication and managing their staff, recognising and addressing unconscious bias
- Bullying, harassment and discrimination rates reduce (NHS Staff Survey bench marked against 2019/20 results)
- Improve the percentage of staff who recommend COCH as a place to work (NHS Staff Survey bench marked against 2019/20 results)
- Increase the rating of staff health and wellbeing (NHS Staff Survey bench marked against 2019/20)

Our Approach

We have identified the first three phases of delivery for our People Strategy between now and 2026.

Phase One
January 2021 to March 2021
During the first phase of delivering the strategy we will focus on improving the staff experience, although this will be an on-going aim. Our priorities will include:

- Drafting a strategy that promotes physical and psychological health and well-being
- Developing new staff engagement approaches to listen and respond to staff issues building on 'Your Voice Matters'. Effective engagement will mean we are responding to the requirements of our Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES)/ Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) and becoming more inclusive.
- Socialise our new People Strategy with **all** our staff.

Phase Two
April 2021 to March 2023
During the second phase of the strategy we will build upon our efforts to improve staff experience and work to improve staff capability and their development. A revised

leadership and management offering will make learning these skills accessible to more of our staff, using blended approaches to learning. We will offer support on how to work well in teams, a new medical leadership programme and encourage the workforce to invest in their skill growth and effectiveness by recommending all staff have protected time to do this. We will grow the civility and respect agenda linked to our values. We will observe the requirements of the National People Plan and the NHS People Promise.

It is a Trust aim to become a learning organisation and a teaching hospital; and we need to understand in more detail what this means for us, through evaluation and clarity of objectives and what it means we must ask of our staff. Introducing a coaching and mentoring culture will support us to develop our ability to have effective conversations and grow an open and transparent culture of speaking up.

By April 2022 we aim to have many of the policies and procedures

Conclusion

in place that support the effective management and development of our workforce. The development of these policies and procedures will have been mindful of the culture we wish to grow, and the implementation of them will aim to uphold our values.

Phase Three

April 2023 to March 2026

Our third phase will build on phases one and two and involve strategic workforce approaches in consideration of the supply and demand of the staff and skills both that are available to us as well as those we need. We will join with system-level models of international recruitment,

which will improve support to new starters as well as being more efficient and better value for money, as well as develop workforce sharing agreements locally, to enable rapid deployment of our people across localities when we need to do so.

We will actively work alongside schools, colleges, universities and local communities to attract a more diverse range of people into health and care careers. In addition we will make better use of routes into NHS careers (including volunteering, apprenticeships and direct-entry clinical roles) as well as supporting recruitment into non-clinical roles.

The People Strategy has described, in detail, our intended response to the challenges, risks and opportunities facing the Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, in terms of its people.

It outlines our broad commitments and provides a clear framework for action for 2021 - 2026, in support of delivering our Organisational Strategy. We have set out our three main aims for sustaining safe levels of staff availability; improving staff capability and curating a positive staff experience.

We have also identified within these aims, nine key deliverables:

Availability

1. Strategic Workforce Planning
2. New Ways of Working
3. System Collaboration

Capability

4. Education, Training and Development
5. Leadership and Line Management
6. Performance Management

Experience

7. Staff Engagement
8. Fair and Equitable Place to Work
9. Safe Working Environment

In summary, we believe by delivering on our commitment within this People Strategy and contributing towards the objectives contained within the NHS's National People Plan 2020/21, we will have moved towards creating a Trust where we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place at the right time, working in an environment which is both positive and engaging.

It is the responsibility of us all to give of our best in making this happen.

Thank you

Our Chair, our entire Board of Directors and our Executive Directors wish to thank staff, students, volunteers and everyone associated with the Countess of Chester, for everything you do every single day for the Trust, your colleagues and most importantly, our patients.



References

1. West, M, The NHS crisis of caring for staff, March 2019, <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2019/03/nhs-crisis-caring>
2. Data provided from Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Annual Report; Workforce Information and Data; Staff Survey 2019
3. Digital and Data Strategy 2020 - 2026
4. COCH WDES Report, 2020
5. The People Plan for 2020/21