Recruitment

Final Internal Audit Report

October 2021

Public Health Wales NHS Trust

Contents

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Distribution:	Matthew Browne, Interim Head of Resourcing and Talent
Committee:	Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

Audit and Assurance Services conform with all Public Sector Internal Audit Standards as validated through the external quality assessment undertaken by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Executive Summary

Purpose

The overall objective of the review was to evaluate and determine the adequacy of the systems and controls in place within the Trust for recruitment arising from the Health Protection business case, in order to provide assurance to the Trust's Audit and Corporate Governance Committee that risks material to the achievement of system's objectives are managed appropriately.

Overview

We have issued substantial assurance on this area.

We did not identify any high or medium priority matters arising during our fieldwork.

Report Classification

Substantial

Few matters require attention and are compliance or advisory in nature. **Low impact** on residual risk exposure.

Assurance summary[1]

Assurance objectives		Assurance
1	Recruited in line with the Health Protection business case	Substantial
2	Initiatives to recruit staff within the business case	Substantial
3	Recruitment undertaken in line with agreed processes	Substantial
4	Monitoring and reporting against the business case	Substantial
5	Risks implementing the business case are monitored and reported	Substantial
6	System in place to capture lessons learnt	Substantial

[1]The objectives and associated assurance ratings are not necessarily given equal weighting when formulating the overall audit opinion.

1. Introduction

1.1   Our review of recruitment was completed in line with Public Health Wales NHS Trust's (the 'Trust' or the 'organisation') Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22. The review sought to provide the Trust with assurance that there are effective processes in place to manage the risks associated with recruitment.

1.2   In November 2020 the Trust submitted a 'Transformation of Health Protection Services in Wales' business case to Welsh Government (WG) to request additional resources for its health protection response. In January 2021 further information was provided to WG identifying those posts that were deemed critical. A total of 109.90WTE critical posts were identified in specialties including infection management and surveillance, and field epidemiology. In addition, a range of support function posts in areas such as informatics, business planning and training were also identified by the Trust. A number of posts had been approved prior to Christmas 2020 to enable activity to commence. The business cases sought to 'grow' a Wales workforce within the Trust to support NHS Wales, local authorities and wider partners.

1.3   By April 2021 WG approval had been obtained for 127 new posts. To date 113 posts have been advertised and are at varying stages of the recruitment process, with 14 yet to start the process.

1.4   The relevant lead Executive Director for the review is the Director of People and Organisational Development.

1.5   The potential risks considered in the review were as follows:

- Failure to meet strategic objectives and business needs including prioritisation of the Health Protection response where delays in recruiting to posts impact on service delivery and the wellbeing of existing staff.
- Agreed posts outlined in the business case remain vacant due to their specialist nature and the inability of the Trust to recruit to the posts.
- Inappropriate and / or unnecessary recruitment where processes are not adhered to.

2. Detailed Audit Findings

Objective 1: The Trust has recruited in line with the staffing categories approved in the Health Protection business case.

2.1   The staffing categories in the Health Protection business case are described as Urgent, Resilience, and Vaccination Programme which are consistent with the weekly descriptions recorded in the recruitment update papers and the underlying detailed recruitment tracker spreadsheet.

2.2   We selected a sample of job titles recruited for Health Protection from the Recruiting Manager KPIs spreadsheet and confirmed the job titles were consistent with the Annex to the Health Protection business case.

Conclusion:

2.3   The Trust has recruited in line with the staffing categories approved in the Health Protection business case. We did not identify any matters arising. (Substantial Assurance)

Objective 2: Appropriate initiatives are in place to recruit specialist staff detailed within the business case.

2.4   The initiatives to recruit staff within the business case have included the traditional NHS Jobs, the Trust's regular Social Media communications, and the team's network contacts.

2.5   LinkedIn has been used to search for potential candidates from publicly available information regarding their skills and experience, and then they were approached directly to inform them of posts which may be of interest to them. If they are interested, then they are advised to apply via NHS Jobs in the traditional way. This has proved useful in seeking to fill the specialist posts, with detailed written guidance developed regarding how it should be used.

2.6   The success of each initiative has been considered on an ongoing basis and the intention is to consider this further at the end of the process.

Conclusion:

2.7   Appropriate initiatives are in place to recruit specialist staff detailed within the business case. (Substantial Assurance)

Objective 3: The recruitment process that the Trust are responsible for was undertaken in line with agreed processes, a timely manner and appropriately resourced.

2.8   The agreed processes have been followed by the Trust to undertake the Health Protection recruitment and it was broadly undertaken in accordance with the target timescales for each stage of the process. Perhaps inevitably, considering that it was responding to a pandemic, some delays at the peak of the process were identified. However, these were not overly excessive or unreasonable in the circumstances, and as such the Health Protection recruitment process appears to be appropriately resourced.

Conclusion:

2.9   The recruitment process that the Trust is responsible for was undertaken in line with agreed processes, a timely manner and appropriately resourced. (Substantial Assurance)

Objective 4: Appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring and reporting to relevant groups and committees on recruitment against the business case.

2.10 Monitoring reports are prepared and presented weekly to the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Steering Group, and extracts of these are reported into the Business

Executive Team (BET) with updates also submitted each month to the People & Organisational Development (P&OD) Committee.

2.11   The weekly reports included up to date information for each category of the Health Protection business case such as vaccination, urgent/critical and resilience, which was analysed across each stage of the recruitment process (i.e. approved, signed off, included on the TRAC recruitment system, advertised, offered, accepted / start date agreed and in post). In addition, progress against recruitment forecast has been reported, which at the time of our fieldwork had achieved approximately 70% of posts filled.

Conclusion:

2.12   Appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring and reporting to relevant groups and committees on recruitment against the Health Protection business case. (Substantial Assurance)

Objective 5: The risks associated with implementation of the business case are recorded, monitored and reported on, with appropriate action taken to minimise the risks.

2.13   The Trust's Corporate Risk Register recognises the risk of not delivering the Health Protection response but confirms that a dedicated team has been put in place to support this, including a People and OD Business Partner to assist with the response.

2.14   Since September 2021, the recruitment monitoring reports have been expanded to include detailed information regarding a handful of posts which are considered to be at significant risk of not being filled by the target deadline.

Conclusion:

2.15   The risks associated with implementation of the business case are recorded, monitored and reported on, with appropriate action taken to minimise the risks. (Substantial Assurance)

Objective 6: A system is in place to capture any lessons learnt from undertaking this rapid recruitment process.

2.16   The Trust intends to capture lessons learnt at the end of the Health Protection business case recruitment process but nothing beyond this has been done at present. Therefore, a lesson learnt log should be set up to record relevant information to go alongside the recruitment process to more easily aid the lessons learnt exercise rather than completing it at the end of the process. (Matter Arising 1 – Low Priority)

Conclusion:

2.17   A lesson learnt log should be set up to more easily aid the lessons learnt exercise rather than completed at the end of the recruitment process. (Substantial Assurance)

Appendix A: Management Action Plan

Matter Arising 1: System in place to capture lessons learnt (Design)	Impact
The Trust intends to capture lessons learnt at the end of the Health Protection business case recruitment process, but nothing beyond this has been undertaken at present.	Lessons learnt during the recruitment process may be overlooked.

Recommendations	Priority
A lessons learnt log should be set up to record relevant information to go alongside the recruitment process and to more easily aid the lessons learnt exercise rather than completing at the end of the recruitment process. In addition, all staff involved in the recruitment process should be able to contribute to it.	Low

Agreed Management Action	Target Date	Responsible Officer
The continuous weekly reporting was highlighting concerns and enabled the continuous development in terms of reaching the Health Protection Business Case objectives. A log will now be created to support a high-level process explanation that can be utilised in any such future reactive circumstance.	January 2022	Matthew Browne - Interim Head of Resourcing and Talent

Appendix B: Assurance opinion and action plan risk rating

Audit Assurance Ratings

We define the following levels of assurance that governance, risk management and internal control within the area under review are suitable designed and applied effectively:

	Substantial assurance	Few matters require attention and are compliance or advisory in nature. **Low impact** on residual risk exposure.
	Reasonable assurance	Some matters require management attention in control design or compliance. **Low to moderate impact** on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	Limited assurance	More significant matters require management attention. **Moderate impact** on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	No assurance	Action is required to address the whole control framework in this area. **High impact** on residual risk exposure until resolved.
	Assurance not applicable	Given to reviews and support provided to management which form part of the internal audit plan, to which the assurance definitions are not appropriate. These reviews are still relevant to the evidence base upon which the overall opinion is formed.

Prioritisation of Recommendations

We categorise our recommendations according to their level of priority as follows:

Priority level	Explanation	Management action
High	Poor system design OR widespread non-compliance. Significant risk to achievement of a system objective OR evidence present of material loss, error or misstatement.	Immediate*
Medium	Minor weakness in system design OR limited non-compliance. Some risk to achievement of a system objective.	Within one month*
Low	Potential to enhance system design to improve efficiency or effectiveness of controls. Generally issues of good practice for management consideration.	Within three months*

* Unless a more appropriate timescale is identified/agreed at the assignment.

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