

# Review of Workforce Planning Arrangements – Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

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# Summary report

## Introduction

- 1 An effectively planned workforce is fundamental to providing good quality care services. The NHS employs a range of clinical and non-clinical staff who deliver services across primary, secondary and community care, representing one of the largest NHS investments. Over the years there have been well documented concerns about the sustainability of the NHS workforce. And workforce challenges are routinely highlighted to us in our audit reviews and ongoing engagement with health bodies. Despite an overall increase in NHS workers, these concerns remain. The workforce gaps are particularly acute for certain professions such as GPs, nurses, radiologists, paediatricians and ophthalmologists ([A Picture of Healthcare, 2021](#)). In nursing alone, the Royal College of Nursing Wales reported 2,900 vacancies in their [2022 Nursing in Numbers](#) analysis. In addition, the social care sector, is also facing its own workforce issues. These challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic as the health sector looks to recover services.
- 2 Given the current challenges, robust and innovative workforce planning is more important than ever. Effective workforce planning ensures that both current and future services have the workforce needed to deliver anticipated levels of service effectively and safely. Planning is especially important given the length of time required to train some staff groups, particularly medical staff.
- 3 National and local workforce plans need to anticipate service demand and staffing levels over a short, medium, and long term. But there are a range of complex factors which impact on planning assumptions, these include:
  - workforce age profile, retirement, and pension taxation issues;
  - shifts in attitudes towards full and part-time working;
  - developing home grown talent and the ability to attract talent from outside the country into Wales; and
  - service transformation which can change roles and result in increasing specialisation of roles.
- 4 The Trust approved its 2023-26 People and Culture Plan in May 2023. The Trust is also developing a strategic workforce plan for the organisation to detail delivery which it is anticipating will be received by the Board in April 2024.
- 5 The key focus of our review has been on whether the Trust's approach to workforce planning is helping it to effectively address current and future NHS workforce challenges. Specifically, we looked at the Trust's strategic approach to workforce planning, operational action to manage current and future challenges, and monitoring and oversight arrangements. Operational workforce management arrangements, such as staff/nurse rostering, consultant job planning and operational deployment of agency staffing, fall outside the scope of this review.
- 6 The methods we used to deliver our work are summarised in **Appendix 1**.

## Key findings

Overall, we found that **the Trust is taking effective steps to mitigate current workforce challenges and clarify its longer-term strategic vision, however medium to longer-term resourcing is a significant and ongoing barrier.**

### Key workforce planning challenges

7 The Trust is facing significant workforce challenges. The workforce indicators presented in **Appendix 2** highlight that the Trust's workforce levels and costs have increased between 2017-18 and 2022-23. This included an increase in agency staffing, from £180,000 in 2018-19 to £1.7 million in 2021-22<sup>1</sup> which has since reduced and is significantly lower than Health Board agency spend. While vacancies are comparatively low, the Trust has seen higher than usual turnover and concerningly, for 67% of the staff who left the organisation in 2021-22, their reasons for leaving were stated as either unknown or other. A new process is due to be rolled out which aims to seek further clarity on the reasons for staff leaving. Noting that ambulance services tend to have higher sickness absence levels than other NHS organisations, the Trust has the highest percentage of sickness absence rates in Wales, which stood at 12.1% in January 2022, although this figure reduced to 8.2% in July 2023 levels increased in August 2023 to 9.2%.

### Strategic approach to workforce planning

**The Trust is strengthening its strategic workforce planning approach to address key risks and is effectively engaging with most stakeholders. However, it needs strengthen how it accesses and analyses workforce intelligence.**

8 The Trust's strategic vision and plans focus on strengthening the workforce to overcome key current and future workforce risks. The Trust intends to strengthen its approach further by developing a strategic workforce plan for the organisation which it expects to complete by April 2024. The Trust has access to significant amounts of data which it uses to inform key decisions relating to its workforce. However, there is a need to better integrate IT systems to enable workforce data analysis and ensure its workforce establishment model is routinely updated. While the relationship between the Trust and its trade union partners is sometimes challenging, the Trust effectively engages with its staff, wider stakeholders and commissioners to provide assurance and develop workforce solutions.

<sup>1</sup> The Trust has indicated increased agency costs in 2021/22 to pandemic and system pressure-related factors, such as staffing to cohort patients outside of some Emergency Departments. This complicates spending comparisons with pre-pandemic levels. Agency use has subsequently decreased, with the Trust relying on alternative variable pay aspects, primarily overtime for employed staff, to support its capacity.

## Operational action to manage workforce challenges

**We found that The Trust is proactively addressing its workforce challenges, based on a strong understanding of risks. However broader workforce transformation is constrained by resource availability.**

- 9 The Trust has invested in its workforce planning capacity and capabilities, such as by recruiting a head of workforce planning and transformation and developing workforce planning training for managers. The Trust will need to ensure that workforce planning training is realising the intended benefits. There is also a need to ensure consistent central support for recruitment activity across the Trust.
- 10 The Trust demonstrates a relatively strong understanding of the barriers and risks associated with implementing the strategic vision for its workforce. It is adopting a proactive approach to mitigate some longer-term and immediate challenges under its influence. For example, to overcome recruitment challenges. It is looking to introduce home working for nurses and raising the profile of paramedicine within universities.
- 11 While the Trust has costed its workforce plan through the development of its Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP), it may require significant resource to fully achieve the significant transformation set out in its strategic vision. At the same time, the Trust currently holds substantial inefficiencies in its workforce due to handover delays caused by system pressures. It also finds securing ongoing additional investment from commissioners to build capacity challenging, and additional short term workforce funding can make recruitment and retention more difficult. To address these issues, the Trust will need to continue to work closely with its commissioners and Welsh Government.

## Monitoring and oversight of workforce plan/strategy delivery

**There is reasonable Board-level oversight of operational workforce challenges, but it is too early to judge the impact of delivering the People and Culture Plan.**

- 12 The People and Culture Committee receive regular and comprehensive reports relating to the workforce. Information to the committee has been increasingly operational, however at the August 2023 committee, the Committee approved metrics and a data dashboard to help monitor the progress of strategic aims within the People and Culture Plan. The Trust will also need to ensure effective arrangements for monitoring progress of its strategic workforce plan, once approved.

- 13 External oversight by the Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC)<sup>2</sup> ensures the commissioners understand the Trust’s service workforce pressures. This helps to align commissioner’s expectations, with available finance and workforce resource. The Trust has benchmarked its performance with other ambulance services however, this is not regular nor is it reported broadly within the organisation.

## Recommendations

- 14 **Exhibit 1** details the recommendations arising from this audit. These include timescales and our assessment of priority. The Trust’s response to our recommendations is summarised in **Appendix 3**.

### Exhibit 1: recommendations

#### Recommendations

##### Terms of Reference

- R1 We found that the Terms of Reference for both the Integrated Technical Planning Group and the Forecasting and Modelling Group require review. The Trust should review these to ensure they are accurate and up-to-date, particularly to clarify what role they will play in supporting the new People and Culture Plan and developing strategic workforce plan. **(medium priority)**

##### Workforce information systems

- R2 We found that there is scope for the Trust to make better use of its workforce information by ensuring data is consistent, joined up and up to date. The Trust should work to ensure that:
- Systems that hold workforce information including Electronic Staff Record (ESR), Global Rostering System (GRS) and finance systems interconnect, where possible; **(medium priority)**
  - Explore ways to resource the management of a system to ensure an up-to-date establishment model. **(medium priority)**

<sup>2</sup> The Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC) is Joint Committee of the seven health boards in Wales with the responsibility for planning and securing sufficient ambulance services for the population.

## Recommendations

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### Evaluating workforce planning training

- R3 We found that the Trust is strengthening workforce planning capability through training initiatives, but it will need to evaluate these to ensure they are having the desired impact. The Trust should develop an evaluation framework to measure the success of its training programme. **(medium priority)**
- 

### Recruitment support

- R4 We found that only the emergency ambulance services department has dedicated support from the central management team for recruitment activity, due to capacity issues. While the central team can provide support on a case-by-case basis, the Trust should review opportunities to increase the corporate support offered to other departments across the organisation. **(medium priority)**
- 

### Metrics for Strategic Workforce Plan monitoring

- R5 Once the Trust has developed its strategic workforce plan it should also ensure there is appropriate reporting of targets and milestones to enable the People and Culture Committee to monitor its progress. **(medium priority)**
- 

### Benchmarking

- R6 The Trust does not routinely benchmark its workforce performance metrics with other health bodies in Wales. Its performance benchmarking with other ambulance trusts is infrequent. The Trust should introduce regular workforce benchmarking with similar organisations and use this to inform relevant groups and committees on its performance and efficiency and to identify and share good practice. **(medium priority)**

# Detailed report

## Our findings

15 The following three tables set out the areas that we have reviewed and our findings. These focus on:

- the Trust’s approach to strategic workforce planning (**Exhibit 2**);
- operational action to manage workforce challenges (**Exhibit 3**); and
- monitoring and oversight of workforce plan/strategy delivery (**Exhibit 4**).

### Exhibit 2: strategic approach to workforce planning

This section focusses on the Trust’s approach to strategic planning. Overall, we found that **the Trust is strengthening its strategic workforce planning approach to addressing key risks and is effectively engaging with most stakeholders. However, it needs strengthen how it accesses and analyses workforce intelligence.**

What we looked at	What we found
<p>We considered whether the Trust’s workforce strategy and plans are likely to address the current and future workforce risks. We expected to see a workforce strategy or plan which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identifies current and future workforce challenges.</li><li>• has a clear vision and objectives.</li><li>• is aligned to the organisation’s strategic objectives and wider organisational plans.</li><li>• is aligned to relevant national plans, policies, and legislation. Including the</li></ul>	<p>We found that <b>the Trust is strengthening its strategic approach for the workforce through recently approved and developing plans which align to its strategic vision</b></p> <p>The Trust’s strategic vision entitled <u>‘Delivering Excellence: Our Vision for 2030’</u>, describes the Trust’s aim to become a more clinically-focussed organisation that reduces the need to convey patients to hospital by increasingly providing care closer to home. This overall aim, along with other ambitions within the strategic vision, are based on identified current and future workforce challenges, including staff wellbeing and support, and delays in treating patients due to system pressures.</p> <p>‘Delivering Excellence’ appropriately recognises the workforce as a key enabler of this vision and identifies relevant supporting ambitions including transforming the Trust’s education and training provision and protecting staff wellbeing. There is clear alignment between this vision and the Trust’s</p>

What we looked at	What we found
<p>national workforce strategy for health and social care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is supported by a clear implementation plan.</li> </ul>	<p>recently approved People and Culture Plan 2023-26 (the Plan) and Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP) 2022-23. The Plan also appropriately aligns to key national policies including the national Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care.</p> <p>The IMTP and People and Culture Plan contain deliverables and measures against the ambitions of Delivering Excellence, with a focus on improving Culture, Capacity and Capability. The Trust intends to review its People and Culture Plan, in addition to its statutory review and refresh of the IMTP, each year. The People and Culture Plan has an initial one-year focus which contains an ambitiously high number of actions (49). Organisational capacity, service pressures and financial constraints are amongst its risks to its delivery of its actions, which it is actively managing. At a service level, the Trust has developed transactional service-specific workforce plans. For example, the plan for the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) details monthly national projections for the emergency medical workforce up to March 2027.</p> <p>The Trust is developing a corporate-level strategic workforce plan to fill the gap between annual iteration of the People and Culture Plan and the longer-term strategic vision of 'Delivering Excellence'. The strategic workforce plan, which is being developed using the <a href="#">HEIW's six step method for workforce planning</a>, will have a medium to long term focus and will be reviewed annually. The Trust's intention is that it will provide a basis for workforce modelling to deliver its strategic ambitions and is aiming for Board-level approval in April 2024.</p>
<p>We considered whether the Trust has a good understanding of current and future service demands. We expected to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of reliable workforce information to determine workforce need and risk in the short and longer term; and</li> </ul>	<p>We found that <b>the Trust understands its current and future service demands, however there is opportunity to better integrate systems to help ensure that capacity and demand information and workforce establishment can be regularly updated</b></p> <p>The Trust demonstrates that it seeks to understand its workforce capacity and demand and performance information. Between 2018 and 2022, the Trust commissioned demand and capacity reviews: one for Emergency Medical Services and one Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services,</p>

What we looked at	What we found
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action to improve workforce data quality and address any information gaps.</li> </ul>	<p>and an additional capacity review for 111 operations. These reviews focused on understanding the level of resource required to meet expected levels of performance, including which staff groups should be expanded or decreased. The Trust incorporated the findings into its ongoing workforce planning and informed discussions with its commissioners.</p> <p>The Trust has effective approaches for interpreting workforce data. These include a weekly 'Forecasting and Modelling Cell' and a weekly Integrated Technical Planning Group. The former analyses and interprets forecasts for the operations teams and the latter analyses key data relating to workforce, estate, vehicle fleet, rosters, and financial planning. We found these groups provide helpful ongoing information within reports. For example, reports that contain information provided by the Integrated Technical Planning Group demonstrated comprehensive and thorough analysis which helped inform key decisions relating to workforce. However, the Terms of Reference for both these groups require review and update as some arrangements appear to have evolved since they were established (<b>Recommendation 1</b>). A review of the terms of reference for these groups would also provide an opportunity to set out their roles in supporting delivery of the newly approved People and Culture Plan and developing strategic workforce plan.</p> <p>While the Trust has not undertaken a skills gap analysis, it has conducted service reviews as part of its financial sustainability programme. These reviews focused on ensuring consistency of job roles to achieve efficiencies where possible. We understand that the Trust intends to use this to inform its understanding of skill mix and need going forward and will be key to discussions on job planning and recruitment.</p> <p>There is also scope for the Trust to make better use of its workforce information by ensuring data is consistent, joined up and up to date. During interviews, we heard how managers within the organisation are not yet consistently providing data to the central team. We also understand that systems that hold workforce information including Electronic Staff Record (ESR), Global Rostering System (GRS) and finance systems are not effectively connected, therefore requiring resource intensive manual collation. In addition, while the Trust modelled its establishment for operational</p>

What we looked at	What we found
	<p>staff in 2022, the information was prepared at a single point in time and has not been kept up to date. Consequently, the Trust do not currently have up-to-date establishment information to support decisions relating to workforce (<b>Recommendation 2</b>).</p>
<p>We considered whether the Trust is working with partners to help resolve current and anticipated future workforce challenges. We expected to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective and timely engagement and working with key internal and external stakeholders to tackle current and future workforce issues; and</li> <li>• shared solutions identified with key stakeholders to help address workforce challenges.</li> </ul>	<p>We found that <b>there are challenges with internal and external stakeholder engagement which the Trust is collaborating with partners to resolve</b></p> <p>To inform its development of the People and Culture Plan, the Trust effectively engaged with staff, Trade Union partners, Non-Executive Directors and wider stakeholders, including peer Workforce and Organisational Development, and other UK ambulance services. Specifically in relation to training and qualifications, the Trust engages regularly with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) to explore opportunities to resolve key workforce challenges and support development. For example, the Trust worked with HEIW to develop apprenticeship schemes. The aim of this is to support career progression or those working in areas with high turnover within the Trust and to provide career opportunities and to develop skills and competencies.</p> <p>The Trust has dedicated forums to engage and inform its Trade Union partners, including through the Welsh Ambulance Services Partnership Team, and the Trade Union representatives that attend the People and Culture Committee and Board. At the time of fieldwork, those we spoke to recognised that relationships had come under strain due to recent industrial action. While we did not find any evidence that this was having adverse effects the time of our fieldwork, strained relationships could still present challenges. Nevertheless, senior leaders within the Trust and trade union representatives expressed eagerness to return to more meaningful engagement.</p> <p>As a commissioned organisation, the Trust engages with its commissioners to communicate key workforce challenges and needs and seeks to identify shared solutions. For example, Advanced Paramedic Practitioners receive the benefit of enhancing their skills through sharing their time between the ambulance service and primary care. Forums such as monthly meetings with the Chief</p>

What we looked at	What we found
	Ambulance Services Commissioner and bi-monthly Emergency Ambulance Services Committee (EASC) meetings provide regular opportunities to engage. Meetings cover workforce issues and challenges including vacancies and sickness absence rates.

### Exhibit 3: operational action to manage workforce challenges

This section focusses on the actions the Trust is taking to manage workforce challenges. Overall, **we found that the Trust is proactively addressing its workforce challenges, based on a strong understanding of risks. However broader workforce transformation is constrained by resource availability.**

What we looked at	What we found
<p>We considered whether the Trust has identified sufficient resources to support workforce planning over the short, medium, and long term. We expected to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• clear roles and responsibilities for workforce planning;</li><li>• appropriately skilled staff to ensure robust workforce planning;</li><li>• sufficient workforce capacity across the organisation to plan and deliver the workforce strategy or plan; and</li><li>• sufficient financial resources to deliver the workforce strategy or plan.</li></ul>	<p>We found that <b>the Trust is investing in its corporate workforce planning capacity and capability. However financial pressures and inefficiencies may inhibit the extent that the Trust can invest in delivering its strategic ambitions for example staffing community-based, prevention-focussed service models.</b></p> <p>There appears to be sufficient capacity to support workforce planning. The People and Culture directorate, led by the People and Culture Director has a clear structure with teams covering education and development, workforce planning and organisational development and culture and wellbeing. In 2021, the Trust invested in corporate workforce planning by recruiting a Head of Workforce Transformation and Planning whose role includes developing the strategic workforce plan and managing the workforce planning team of nine staff and managers which includes the recruitment and Electronic Staff Record (ESR) teams.</p> <p>Service leads and operational management understand their role in workforce planning but that operational pressures do not allow them sufficient time to ‘think strategically’ to develop solutions. Service managers also felt there was a need to increase skills and confidence to undertake longer-term workforce planning. At the time of fieldwork, the Trust was developing workforce planning training to support managers to address these challenges. Once in place, the Trust should seek to evaluate the success of its training initiatives to ensure it is realising the intended benefits</p>

What we looked at	What we found
	<p><b>(Recommendation 3).</b> Support for recruitment activities is not consistent across the organisation. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) recruitment is co-ordinated centrally through the workforce team, while other teams undertake their own recruitment activity. Recruitment support is available from the central team when requested for those services. Nevertheless, the devolved arrangement, places a strain on service manager capacity, and can lead to inconsistent practices</p> <p><b>(Recommendation 4).</b></p> <p>Achieving the vision outlined in ‘Delivering Excellence’ and linked plans may require significant ongoing investment to facilitate the additional staff, training and related costs. Those we spoke to were clear that frequent engagement takes place with commissioners to communicate the Trust’s strategic direction which is well-received by partners. However, securing funding in the context of the current significant financial difficulties is a crucial challenge which is extremely difficult to mitigate.</p> <p>It is clear there are growing financial pressures. This will mean that the Trust will need to achieve efficiencies and/or secure additional investment to achieve its strategic ambitions. Delays in handing over patients at emergency departments cause significant inefficiencies for the Trust. For example, in August 2023, 27% of the Trust’s ambulance response staff were unable to respond to further calls due to handover delays. In our 2022 Structured Assessment, we reported that handover delays accounted for around £50 million of inefficiencies for that year. That capacity, if released in part, could support the Trust’s investment in community-based prevention-focussed service models. The Trust is engaged in ongoing work both independently and in partnership with commissioners to try and reduce the current levels of inefficiency.</p> <p>In terms of securing additional funding, the Trust is working in a challenging financial environment where additional funding is less likely. In the recent past, ‘in-year’ funding provided as part of winter pressures money in 2022 supported short-term recruitment of an additional 100 frontline staff.</p>

What we looked at	What we found
	<p>However, the short-term nature of such funding to be used for a specific purpose, restricts the extent that the Trust can invest in service transformation. Short-term funding can also make recruitment and retention difficult. The Trust also needs to make financial savings to achieve a breakeven position. It is addressing this in part through increasing its vacancy control target from £907,000 in 2022-23 to £2.6 million in 2023-24. However, vacancy control is a short-term solution, and it can create a strain on existing staff. The newly introduced vacancy control panel, which includes the Director of People and Culture and the Director of Finance, considers the impact of vacancies on the organisation as well as the potential financial savings. The Trust told us it intended to review the effectiveness of this process during Quarter 3 of 2023-24 to identify potential learning and improvement.</p>

What we looked at	What we found
<p>We considered whether the Trust has a good understanding of the short and longer-term risks that might prevent it from delivering its workforce strategy or plan. We expected to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a good understanding of the barriers that might prevent delivery of the workforce strategy or plan;</li> <li>• plans to mitigate risks which may prevent the organisation from achieving its workforce ambitions; and</li> <li>• clearly documented workforce risks that are managed at the appropriate level.</li> </ul>	<p>We found that <b>The Trust has a good understanding of the risks to delivery of its strategic workforce ambitions</b></p> <p>The Trust demonstrates a good understanding of the shorter and longer-term risks to delivery of its workforce ambitions. These relate to buy-in from staff and stakeholders, financial pressures and staff morale and wellbeing.</p> <p>Corporately, the Trust appropriately manages and reports significant risks through the corporate risk register and Board Assurance Framework. The Trust’s corporate risk register highlights high scoring risks related to the workforce, for example sickness absence, maintaining effective partnerships with the trade unions, and staff wellbeing. Each risk has a detailed list of controls, assurances, gaps in controls and actions which are clear and are likely to have a positive impact on mitigating the risk. For example, for reducing sickness absence the actions on the September 2023 risk register included long term sickness absence deep dives and review of top 100 cases by the people and culture team monthly. While sickness absence performance had significantly improved as of August 2023, the risk remains at 20 due to the likelihood of increased absence over the winter period. The People and Culture Committee is responsible for overseeing these risks which the Assistant Director Leadership Team regularly review.</p>

We considered whether the Trust is effectively addressing its current workforce challenges.

We expected to see:

- effective reporting and management of staff vacancies;
- action to improve staff retention;
- efficient recruitment practices;
- commissioning of health education and training which is based on true workforce need; and
- evidence that the organisation is modernising its workforce to help meet current and future needs.

We found that **the Trust is taking appropriate steps to address current workforce challenges through a range of recruitment, retention and training and development activities.**

The Trust has a successful track-record of recruiting paramedics, and the organisation had the lowest vacancy rate of NHS Wales bodies, at a rate of less than 1% during May 2023. The Trust is successful in recruiting newly qualified paramedics through recruitment events which focus on achieving a large intake. However, it is experiencing challenges in recruiting to other roles such as nurse advisors in its 111 service and staff in its digital team. The Trust is proactive in finding alternative solutions to some of these challenges. For example, the Trust found difficulties recruiting Ambulance Care Assistants, as some candidates do not have a C1 category driving license (necessary to drive an ambulance). To overcome this issue, the Trust now offers training in-house, provided candidates meet all other recruitment criteria. In response to difficulty recruiting nurses, the Trust is looking at allowing nurses in its call centres to work remotely. If this plan is successful, the Trust will seek to attract overseas nursing candidates who wish to work remotely from their own countries.

Beyond recruitment, the record for completing staff exit interviews has been inconsistent and in some cases poor. This means that it is difficult for the organisation understand the reasons for their departure and to introduce approaches to remove the 'drivers' that cause staff to leave. To address this, the Trust is trialling a new 'Moving on Interview' process in place of exit interviews. The new process includes newly designed questions, which staff can complete via MS Forms in their own time, rather than led by the manager. The Trust has designed the approach to provide more meaningful intelligence and support the Trust to develop more effective plans to retain staff. Nevertheless, in line with broader NHS Wales, since the pandemic, the Trust has been experiencing higher levels of turnover within its operations department. The increased turnover was particularly the case with within its 999 and 111 call-answering staff, due to the challenging working environment. The Trust has also seen a general increase in staff leaving within 6-12 months of recruitment. To resolve these challenges, the Trust has been trialling different working patterns and practices to retain staff. This includes shorter shifts and virtual working where possible, increased support for new staff and developing clear career progression routes.

What we looked at	What we found
	<p>The Trust has had historic issues with managing its sickness rates. Pre-pandemic, rates were between 6% and 8% but increased during the pandemic with rates peaking at over 12% during winter 2022. The most recent project plan introduced in April 2022 has been effective in reducing rates from 10.6% in July 2022 to 8.2% in July 2023. The Trust has indicated that training for staff and investment in wellbeing services has been particularly successful. The People and Culture Committee receive regular reports containing analysis of specific pressures. There are higher rates of sickness within the operations department and reports also identify hotspots within local areas with helpful analysis and action plans identified, where appropriate.</p> <p>In relation to modernising its workforce, the Trust's long-term strategic framework details an ambition to significantly increase the number of Advanced Paramedic Practitioner positions. The roles which require eight years of training, necessitating longer-term planning. While there is a need for investment to achieve this vision, the Trust is taking steps, where possible, to make these changes, such as by substituting small numbers of vacant Emergency Medical Technician roles with increases in Advanced Paramedic Practitioner roles.</p> <p>The Trust successfully commissions health and education training of paramedics through HEIW and numbers of placements are based on the Trust's true workforce planning numbers. More recently this commissioning has expanded beyond a single University (Swansea) to also include Glyndwr University in Wrexham.</p>

#### Exhibit 4: monitoring and oversight of workforce plan/strategy delivery

This section of the report focusses on the robustness of corporate oversight of workforce risks. We found that **there is reasonable Board level oversight of operational workforce challenges, but it is too early to judge the impact of delivering the People and Culture Plan.**

What we looked at	What we found
<p>We considered whether delivery of the Trust's workforce strategy or plan is supported by robust monitoring, oversight, and review. We expected to see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• arrangements in place to monitor the progress of the workforce strategy or plan at management and committee levels;</li><li>• effective action where progress on elements of the workforce strategy or plan are off-track;</li><li>• performance reports showing the impact of delivering the workforce strategy or plan; and</li><li>• the organisation benchmarking its workforce performance with similar organisations.</li></ul>	<p>We found that <b>there is reasonable committee and management oversight of workforce performance information, and whilst the Trust has developed metrics to monitor its People and Culture Plan, it is too early to judge its effectiveness</b></p> <p>The Trust has a clear and consistent focus on workforce performance indicators both operationally and at Board and committee level. A variety of different operational groups within the Trust as well as the People and Culture Committee and Emergency Ambulance Services Committee receive workforce metrics and information. Executive Management Team papers contain useful workforce information, such as analysis from the Integrated Technical Planning Group. This aligns to the Trust's strategic objectives, highlighting any financial and operational implications. It also helps the team effectively link workforce, finance, and operational issues for example, informing decisions on the recruitment of 100 additional frontline staff in the latter half of 2022-23.</p> <p>The Trust's People and Culture Committee receive significant information on workforce at each of its quarterly meetings. Where the committee has concerns about a particular workforce area or performance, it seeks further assurance by undertaking deep dives. Recent examples include deep dives on improving attendance, the Trust's volunteers, wellbeing, and turnover. Our review of papers in recent committee meetings found significant amounts of operational information provided to the committee, which may make it difficult for committee members to focus on strategic issues. However, the recent approval of the People and Culture Plan and work to develop a strategic workforce plan is likely to support the committee to maintain a medium to longer-term focus when considering the Trust's workforce.</p>

What we looked at	What we found
	<p>Following the People and Culture Plan’s approval in May 2023, the People and Culture Committee approved metrics to monitor the Plan in August 2023. The metrics link to the themes and strategic objectives in the Plan and IMTP and will receive quarterly oversight. The metrics focus on short-term areas such as turnover and moving on interviews and employee engagement as well as some longer-term aspects including education and development. It will also include information from the Trust’s newly purchased pulse survey tool, which should provide an insight into staff opinions, though it is currently too early to comment on the tool’s effectiveness. Targets and milestones to deliver the People and Culture Plan are delivered via the Directorate Plan which is managed by the People and Culture leadership team and reported to the Strategic Transformation Board and PCC. The Trust is in the process of preparing a dashboard, which may help to provide this assurance on progress and impact. Once the Trust has developed its strategic workforce plan, it should also ensure there is appropriate reporting of targets and milestones to enable the People and Culture Committee to monitor its progress <b>(Recommendation 5)</b>.</p> <p>The Committee also receives a comprehensive Monthly Integrated Quality and Performance Report (MIQPR). The Trust has recently revised the metrics covered in this report and now include additional, high-level people and culture indicators, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mental health-related sickness absence rates; and</li> <li>• data relating to applicants and shortlisted candidates from underrepresented groups.</li> </ul> <p>These additions should further strengthen the performance reports which provide helpful analysis across a multitude of relevant workforce indicators.</p> <p>While the Trust finds it difficult to benchmark performance with other NHS Wales, they benchmark performance with other ambulance services on an informal and irregular basis. The Trust should introduce regular workforce benchmarking with similar organisations and use this to inform relevant groups and committees on its performance and efficiency and to identify and share good practice <b>(Recommendation 6)</b>.</p>

# Appendix 1

## Audit methods

### Exhibit 5: audit methods

**Exhibit 5:** sets out the methods we used to deliver this work. Our evidence is limited to the information drawn from the methods below.

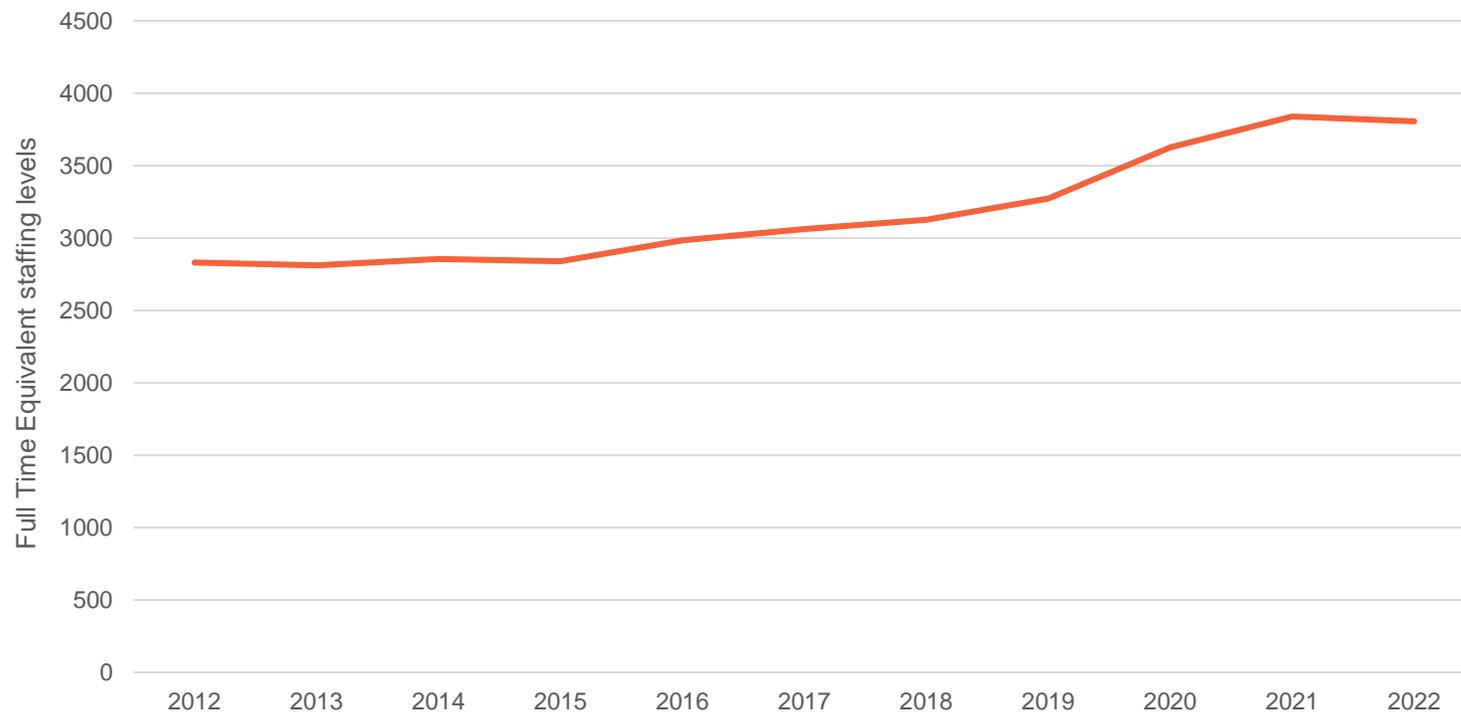
Element of audit approach	Description
Documents	<p>We reviewed a range of documents, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivering Excellence strategy;</li><li>• People and Culture Plan;</li><li>• Integrated Medium Term Plan 2023-6;</li><li>• Papers to inform workforce section of IMTP 2023-6;</li><li>• Structure Charts for People and Culture and Programme Governance;</li><li>• Demand and Capacity Reviews: Emergency Medical Services, Non-Emergency Patient Transport Services, and 111;</li><li>• Terms of Reference for Forecasting and Modelling Cell and Integrated Technical Planning Group</li><li>• Document relating to recruitment of addition 100 EMS staff;</li><li>• EMS Workforce Plan 2023-8;</li><li>• Evidence of evaluation of workforce strategy and/or associated initiatives;</li><li>• Structure charts for workforce planning functions;</li><li>• Corporate risk register; and</li><li>• Corporate and operational level oversight and monitoring of workforce metric and strategy delivery</li></ul>
Interviews	<p>We interviewed the following:</p>

Element of audit approach	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Director for Workforce and Organisational Development;</li> <li>• Deputy Director for Workforce and Organisational Development;</li> <li>• Director of Paramedicine;</li> <li>• Head of Workforce Transformation and Planning;</li> <li>• Strategic planning team officers;</li> <li>• Corporate and operational officers responsible for workforce data and intelligence;</li> <li>• Head of Finance;</li> <li>• Head of Workforce Education and Development;</li> <li>• Non-Executive Director with responsibility for Chairing People and Culture Committee; and</li> <li>• Trade Union representatives to the Board</li> </ul>
Focus groups	<p>We ran two focus groups with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a selection of service leads involved in clinical workforce planning; and</li> <li>• a selection of service leads involved in the workforce planning of enabler services.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2

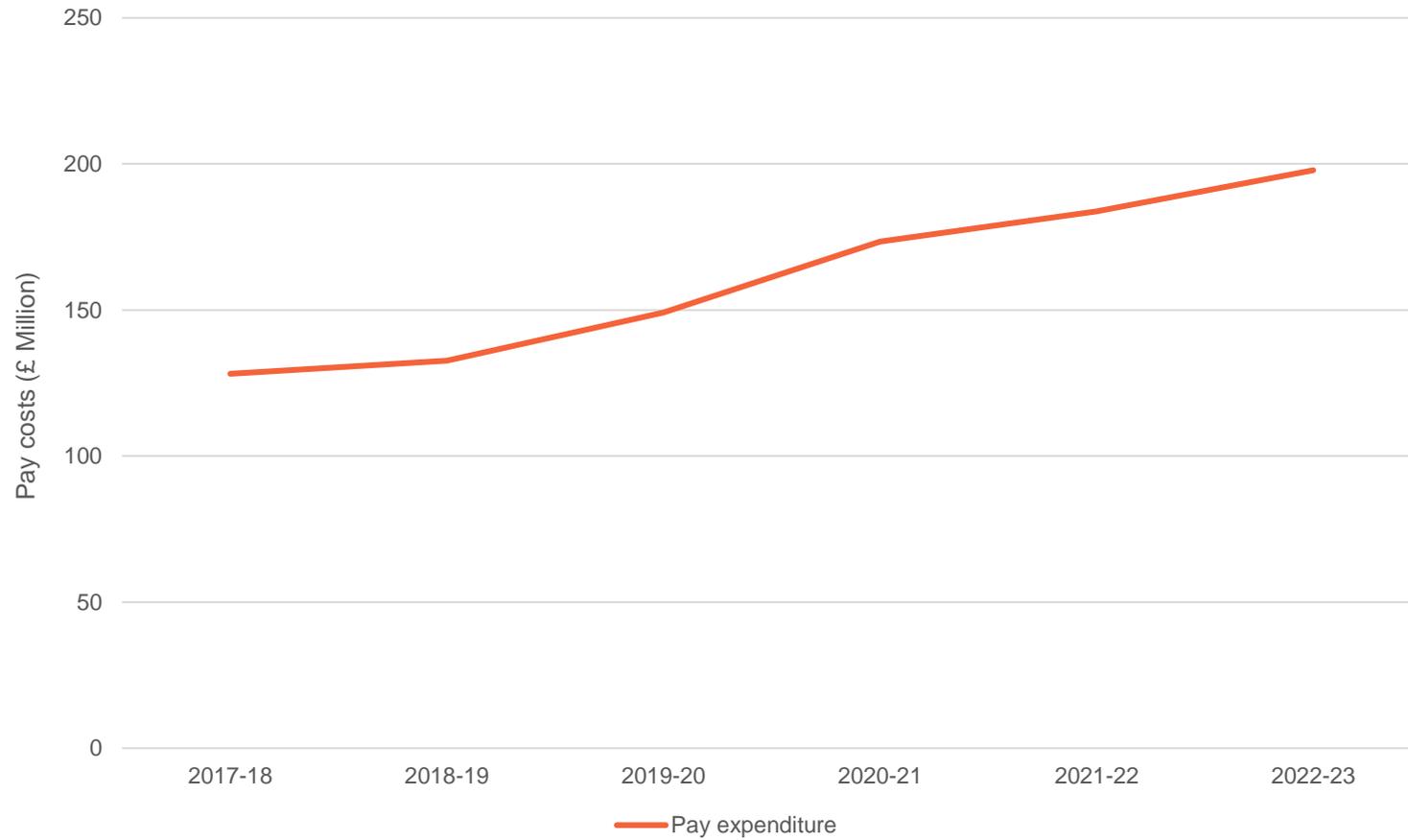
## Selected workforce indicators

**Exhibit 6: trend in workforce numbers (full time equivalent), Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**



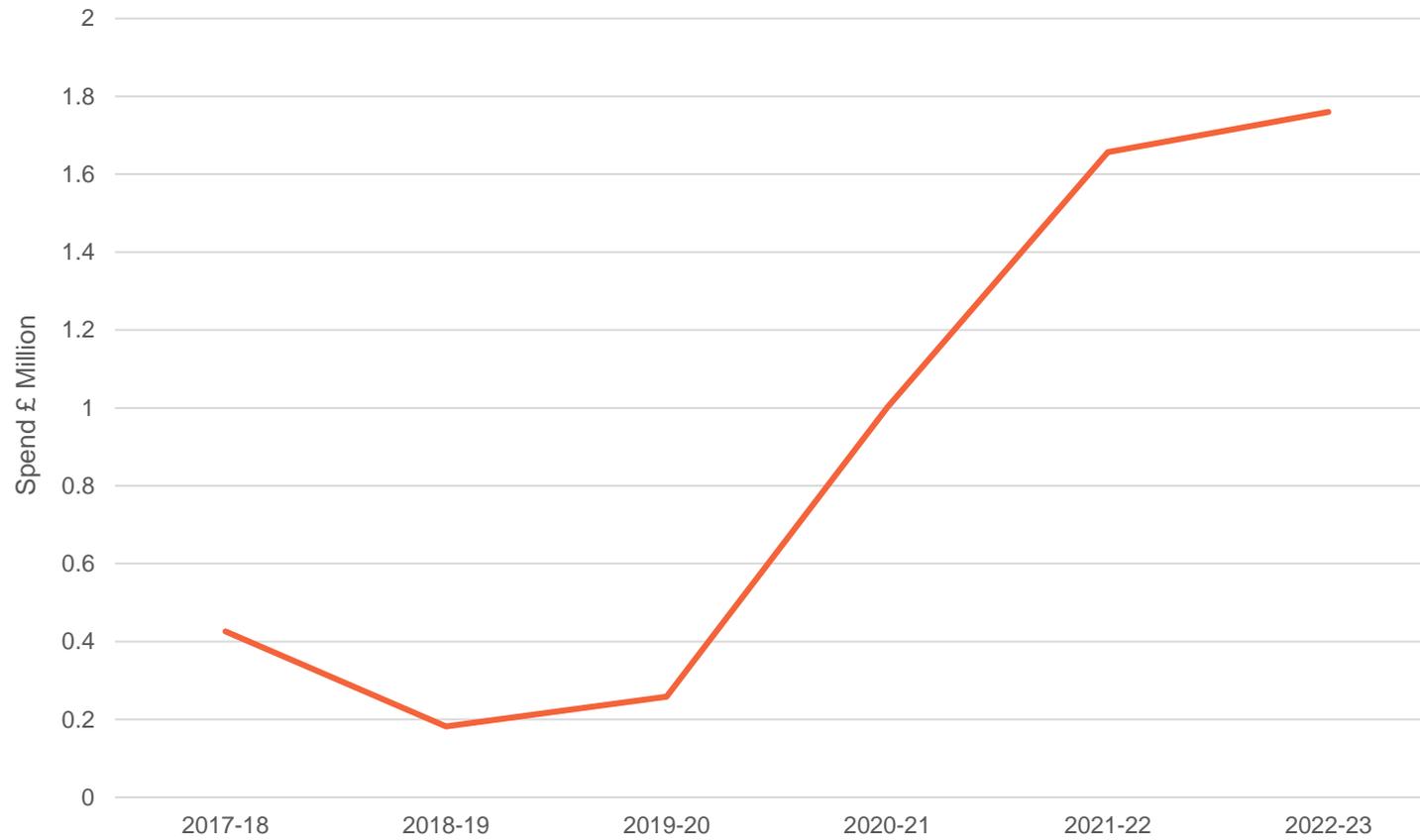
Source: Welsh Government, Stats Wales

**Exhibit 7: trend in actual workforce costs, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**



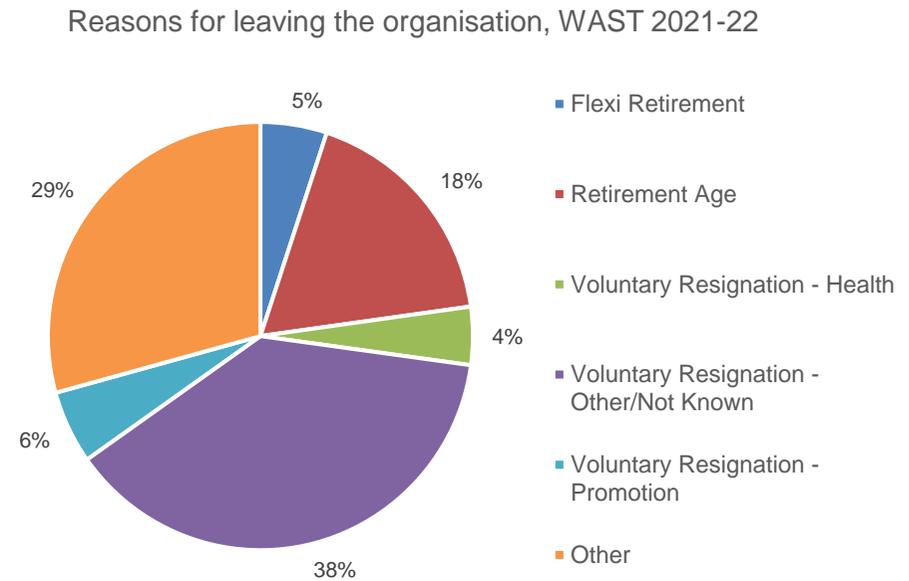
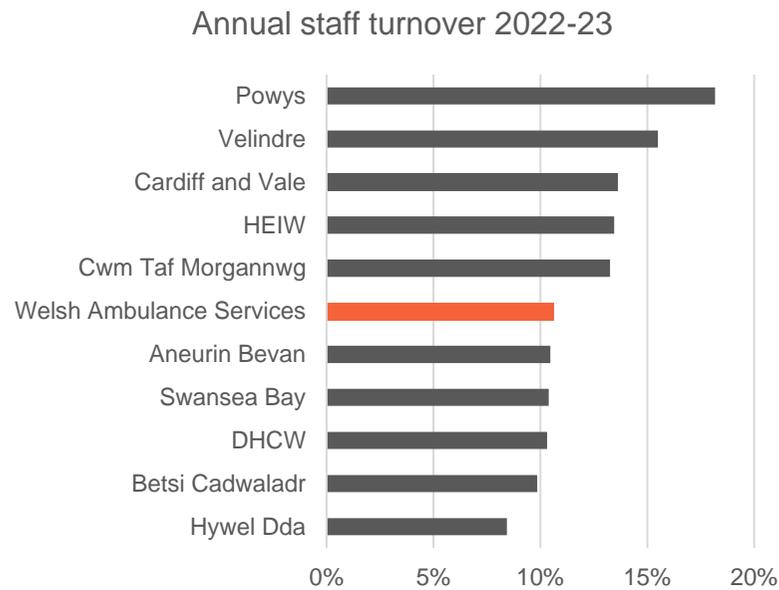
Source: Monthly Monitoring Returns reported to the Welsh Government

**Exhibit 8: trend of expenditure on workforce agency £ million, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**



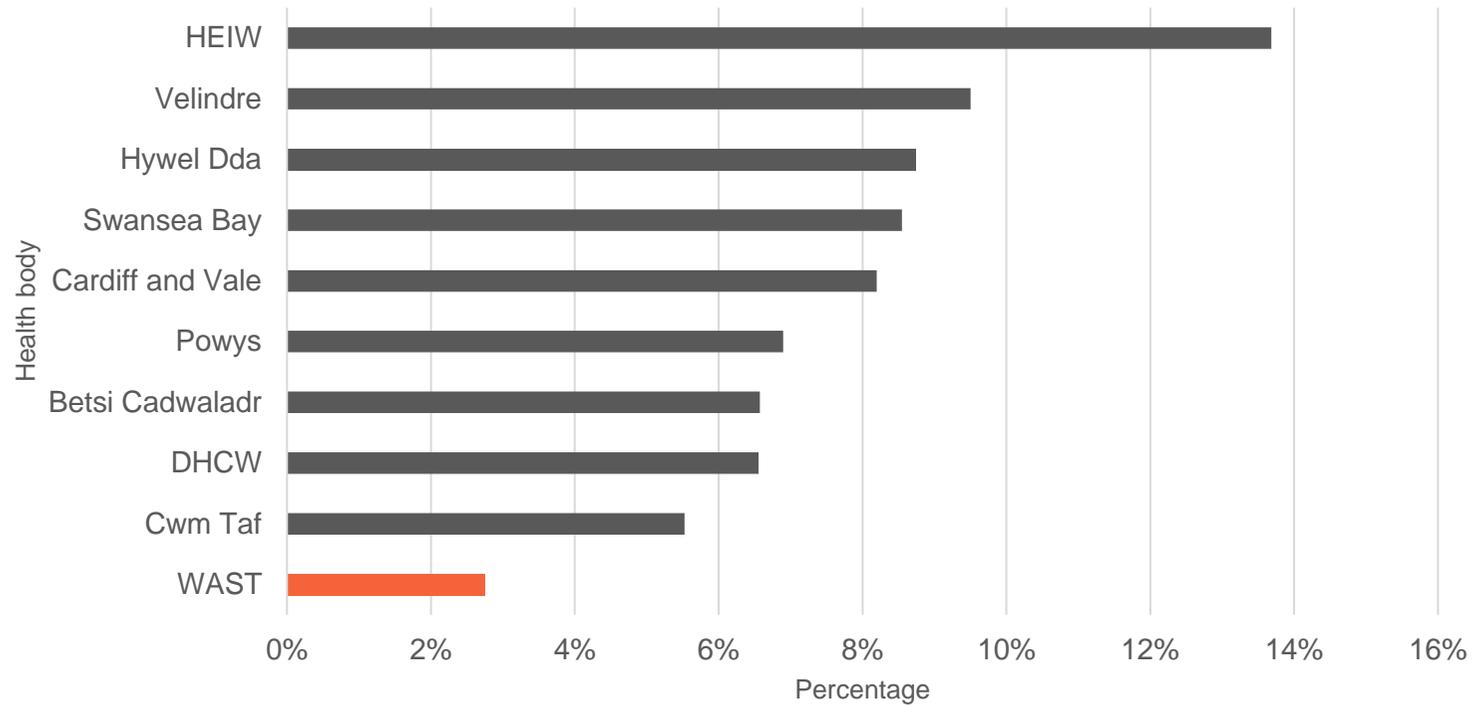
Source: Monthly Monitoring Returns reported to the Welsh Government

**Exhibit 9: annual staff turnover and reason for leaving, 2021-22, Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**



Source: staff turnover data sourced from Health Education and Improvement Wales. Reason for leaving data sourced from health body data request.

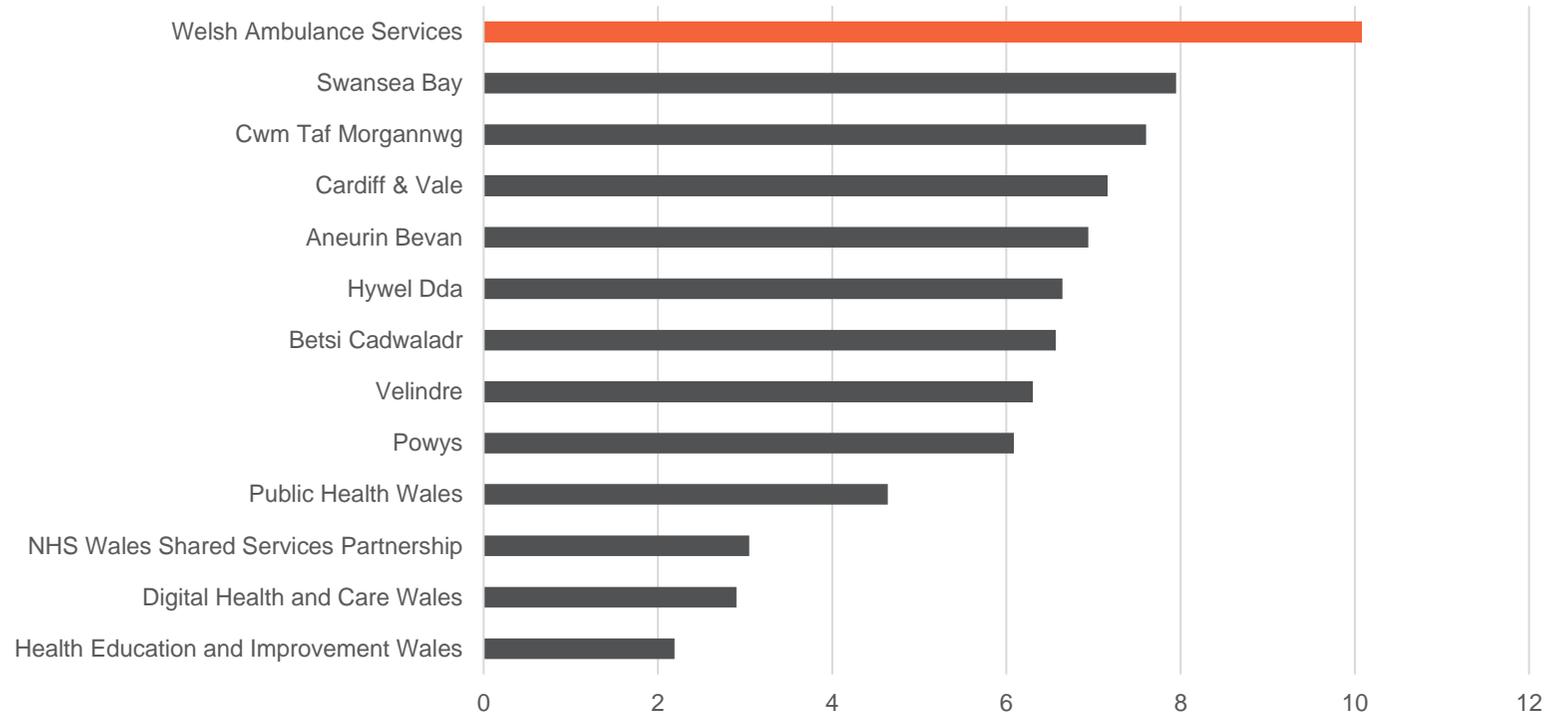
**Exhibit 10: vacancies as a percentage of total establishment, as of March 2022 by organisation**



Source: health body data request

**Exhibit 11: sickness absence by organisation, 2022**

Sickness absence by organisation, 2022



Source: Welsh Government, Stats Wales

# Appendix 3

## Organisational response to audit recommendations

**Exhibit 12:** Trust response to our audit recommendations.

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response	Completion date	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p><b>Terms of Reference</b></p> <p>We found that the Terms of Reference for both the Integrated Technical Planning Group and the Forecasting and Modelling Group require review. The Trust should review these to ensure they are accurate and up-to-date, particularly to clarify what role they will play in supporting the new People and Culture Plan and developing strategic workforce plan (<b>medium priority</b>).</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted</p> <p>Chair and Vice Chair of the ITPG and Forecasting and Modelling Group will update the Terms of Reference within the context of the internal governance structures.</p>	End of December 2023	Assistant Director of Commissioning & Performance / Deputy Director, People and Culture

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response	Completion date	Responsible officer (title)
R2	<p><b>Workforce information systems</b></p> <p>We found that there is scope for the Trust to make better use of its workforce information by ensuring data is consistent, joined up and up to date. The Trust should work to ensure that <b>(medium priority)</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems that hold workforce information including Electronic Staff Record (ESR), Global Rostering System (GRS) and finance systems interconnect, where possible.</li> <li>• Explore ways to resource the management of a system to ensure an up-to-date establishment model.</li> </ul>	<p>Use of Power BI reporting feeding into the Integrated Technical Planning Group is in development by the workforce planning team. This will be used for reporting and maintenance of the data.</p> <p>Alongside this we are working on Integrated Planning Nexus via the Planning and Strategy team which enables our understanding of the interconnection between workforce, fleet, estate etc.</p>	<p>Sept 2024</p> <p>March 2024 (Excel version)</p> <p>Potential PowerBI version (Sept 2024)</p>	<p>Strategic Planning Officer (LP) / Deputy Director, People and Culture</p> <p>Assistant Director of Commissioning &amp; Performance</p>
R3	<p><b>Evaluating workforce planning training</b></p> <p>We found that the Trust is strengthening workforce planning capability through training initiatives, but it will need to evaluate these to ensure they are having the desired impact. The Trust should develop an evaluation framework to measure the success of its training programme <b>(medium priority)</b>.</p>	<p>We will implement an evaluation process to baseline where managers are pre and post training and post 3 months to measure improvement.</p>	<p>June 2024</p>	<p>Head of Workforce Transformation and Planning / Deputy Director for Workforce and Organisational Development</p>

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response	Completion date	Responsible officer (title)
R4	<p><b>Recruitment support</b></p> <p>We found that only the emergency ambulance services department has dedicated support from the central management team for recruitment activity, due to capacity issues. While the central team can provide support on a case-by-case basis, the Trust should review opportunities to increase the corporate support offered to other departments across the organisation <b>(medium priority)</b>.</p>	<p>The recruitment team focus primarily on EMS but do offer support where needed to other services.</p> <p>This would need to be agreed by ELT and the Directorates as resource would need to be moved into the team from elsewhere. Report to be produced and shared with ELT.</p>	May 2024	Head of Workforce Transformation and Planning; / Deputy Director, People and Culture
R5	<p><b>Metrics for People and Culture plan monitoring</b></p> <p>The Trust has recently approved the metrics to enable monitoring progress of the People and Culture Plan, however the metrics do not include targets or milestones. The Trust should work to develop targets and milestones to enable the Committee to understand the progress against the Plan <b>(medium priority)</b>.</p>	<p>Recommendation Accepted.</p> <p>We will build in appropriate targets and milestones into the plan which will be frequently reviewed for delivery and effectiveness of both the plan and the measures.</p>	May 2024	Head of Workforce Transformation and Planning; / Deputy Director, People and Culture

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response	Completion date	Responsible officer (title)
R6	<p><b>Benchmarking</b></p> <p>The Trust does not routinely benchmark its workforce performance metrics with other health bodies in Wales. Its performance benchmarking with other ambulance trusts is infrequent. The Trust should introduce regular workforce benchmarking with similar organisations and use this to inform relevant groups and committees on its performance and efficiency and to identify and share good practice <b>(medium priority)</b>.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted for high level measures and will be based on what other organisations share / make available. Benchmarks need to be with ambulance sector rather than Health Boards</p>	June 2024	<p>Deputy Director, People and Culture / Assistant Director of Commissioning &amp; Performance</p>



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We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.  
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