



AGILE PARTNERSHIP
THROUGH CRISIS
AND CHANGE

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About NHS Professionals

We run the largest NHS flexible staff bank, placing highly skilled people within NHS Trusts to meet their short, medium and long-term workforce needs. Uniquely we are owned by the Department of Health and Social Care and we therefore reinvest any surplus we make back into the NHS and the wider healthcare economy.

Originally formed in 2001, we now have more than 50 client Trusts and over 180,000 healthcare professionals (Bank Members) registered with us, including an increasing amount of Members from overseas. They work flexibly to NHS-assured standards in a wide range of roles including nurses and midwives, doctors, allied health professionals, healthcare scientists, personal social services and non-clinical positions.

We align our vision and objectives with those of the NHS and our teams use their specialist healthcare knowledge to deliver bespoke recruitment solutions for Bank Members and to Trusts. These can range from local shift cover at short notice, through to national and international workforce campaigns such as the COVID-19 Rapid Response programme, where we recruited 20,000 people nationwide within weeks.

Driven by a passion for the NHS and our goal to become its workforce partner of choice, we are continuously improving our services to meet the growing demand for high quality flexible staff right across the healthcare sector.



Foreword by the Chairman



An outstanding team effort

This Annual Review reports on a year that was very much defined by our response to the pandemic. It was a year like no other, where we rewrote plans and processes, fast-tracked change, and stood shoulder-to-shoulder with each other and the NHS – proving that, together, we can drive innovation and improvement at pace for the benefit of the NHS and its patients.

These achievements and innovative new approaches have been driven by our empowered, committed and customer-focused staff, from our on-site teams at Trusts to our wide-ranging support staff.

The fact that, like all organisations, our staff have had to balance their work with the impact of the pandemic on families, loved ones, schools and home life, makes what we have achieved even more remarkable to me.

So, I want to begin with an emphatic and heartfelt ‘thank you’ to everyone at NHSP for their hard work, commitment and dedication and for coming together as one team to support our NHS, successfully and at speed.

Partnering with agility

As the title of this Annual Review sets out, we owe our achievements to the success of our agile partnerships during a time of crisis and change. We have created deeper relationships with our Bank Member and client NHS Trust bases and initiated some exciting new partnerships.

Since March 2020, we have witnessed the profile of NHSP rise, both in terms of our credibility and our capability to deliver. Our customer-focused approach has enabled us to identify and remove inefficiencies and develop a more dynamic and responsive service. Throughout this journey, our agility has been key to our ability to work successfully and deliver on a national scale, while also drawing on local and regional resources and structures. In addition, we were able to start deploying our skills to operate seamlessly across an Integrated Care System (ICS) footprint.

Increased autonomy at scale

Through operating at scale nationally and increasing the operational autonomy of our regional and local teams, we have also increased the speed and agility of decision-making and been able to deliver a faster and smoother response to the requirements of our client Trusts.

This autonomy has in turn led to a palpable growing confidence in our own capability and what our staff can achieve, building on the many key learnings we have acquired.

This year taught us as an organisation that we can still be forward-thinking even during a pandemic, and respond constructively and quickly to almost anything that is asked of us. There have been some really great examples of this, such as Test and Trace, the National Vaccination Programme, resetting our international recruitment and our Doctors Direct service, among others.

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This has meant significant changes in the way we do things to add value and efficiency, in order to provide an easy access service from the client's standpoint. The result is that we are now in a position to offer a call-off service to any NHS organisation and reduce the need for time-consuming procurement processes. This new, more agile approach has also enabled us to start deploying many of the people who volunteered at the start of the pandemic, opening up new channels for putting administrative and healthcare workers in touch with the NHS bodies that want to engage them. At the same time, we can reduce the overall cost to clients as their needs are met near-immediately.

Working as one community

Healthcare is all about being human and we are passionate that every Bank Member in whatever role feels they are an integral part of the NHSP community – whether they are on a long-term placement or working flexibly on an occasional basis.

This year has brought to the fore the enormous aspiration from our healthcare professionals who stepped forward during the pandemic to continue within flexible roles in the NHS. Our challenge now is to continue to develop our understanding of the needs and motivations of this workforce, providing the right access to relevant roles and opportunities and building a long-term, innovative career path for everyone within our Bank Member community.

For example, we know from our Bank Members and from working with our client Trusts how important a strong and comprehensive induction is – therefore we created a specialised induction programme designed around the specific skills

needed for the specific role. We also know that keeping things simple and easy to use means a huge amount, so we are making it easier for Bank Members by making our operations seamless and the associated training and accreditation far simpler.

This year we also took considerable steps to invest in our staff and our business, focusing on employee engagement and wellbeing initiatives, plus improving in-house technology, both as a crisis response but also for the longer term. Everyone within the NHSP team has adapted speedily to new ways of working and I have to especially commend the HR team for coming up with some inspired ideas to ensure we maintain connections and a human touch - from walking meetings that enable people to dial in while exercising, to the ingenious coffee meetings where two staff members' names were pulled out of the hat to meet up on Teams (I had the pleasure of enjoying one of these 'meet-ups' myself). It's meant we never overlook the importance of personal contact and open and positive working relationships – and we are certainly the better for it.

A collaborative and flexible outlook

Going forward, we need to continue to treat our flexible workers as a vital part of the NHS, ensuring that the role they play is fully recognised and rewarded.

This year has been about defining and setting our ambition before starting to build the foundations to allow those ambitions to be realised. From improving our Bank Member experience, to working with client Trusts and new Trusts across the country, we are focusing on a more collaborative way of working, as well

as investing in our people, to ensure the highest quality of staffing and patient care. It is clear that flexibility is here to stay and supporting all healthcare professionals with the right levels of agility and resilience is key. The NHS must continue to be truly agile in order to respond to highly demanding, yet changing, circumstances and flexible workers will continue to play an enormous role in this.

Our mission now is to sustain this energy and deliver dynamic, collaborative and fully flexible workforce solutions to the NHS as it transforms its care model and delivers even higher standards of care in a cost-effective way.

Finally, may I thank my fellow Board members, executive and non-executive, who brought their substantial experience, creativity and good judgement to bear at a time of significantly increased demands being placed on NHSP. The Board, as a whole, helped shape the conditions that enabled and encouraged our CEO Nicola McQueen and all our staff, to respond in the rapid and flexible way that they did. The Board's trust in each member of our staff was entirely well placed and we owe them our thanks for their contribution to NHSP and to the wider NHS over the last year.



Stephen J Collier,
Chairman



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Foreword by the Chief Executive Officer



Close partnerships

NHS Professionals has been on a transformational journey these last 12 months.

We have been able to significantly add more value to the NHS and make a real difference to our community, yet also maintain our core purpose. Furthermore, we can be incredibly proud of our cohesive team effort in helping the NHS and its patients in their hour of need, and working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and other partners to deliver rapid, large-scale workforce solutions to reinforce the NHS front line.

Nurturing close and agile partnerships with our clients and our workforce has been pivotal to our achievements in 2020/21. We have remained committed to improving our offer across business as usual and crisis response services, as well as supporting Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and progress towards a new NHSP 'National Bank', which will allow our Bank Members full access to a greater range of client Trusts and vice versa. Alongside this work we have made significant improvements in clinical governance, safety and compliance.

Most critically, the pandemic meant we had to respond quickly to changing and unplanned demand. We had to support the day-to-day needs of our client Trusts effectively and safely as they continually wrestled with the requirements of such an exceptional year. We had to rapidly plan services to deliver new national programmes, all prior to the planned rollout of sophisticated technology and with a substantial change in our mix of revenue. As time was not on our side, we had to respond with agility and although there were challenges, the experience also brought many positives for the organisation.

We can be incredibly proud of our cohesive team effort in helping the NHS and its patients in their hour of need...

Doing things differently

Our aim was to help resolve the overall pandemic resourcing challenge, rather than just fill shifts. It meant we had to do things differently, attracting large numbers of new, fully trained candidates to the NHS. We had to come up with a resourcing model to recruit enough people at any one time, while also building a workforce with additional resource to manage peaks and flows. It meant we were advising at the front end while in the background we simultaneously continued to recruit our core workforce and also grow a flexible pool, enabling clients to make the most of the resources available and focus on patient care.

We did not have time to implement our existing transformation plan, with infrastructure changes and technology programmes ahead of service delivery: we had to do it the other way around. Notably, had the

pandemic come a year later, with our Vision 2022 (V22) transformation programme, we would have had the necessary new technology in place. However, by putting more minds together to develop solutions, rather than better technology, we were able to grow and innovate faster with each obstacle we faced.

When it came to standing up new services, we already had the basic infrastructure and scale, together with the experience required. But these were exceptional times and we had to ensure we were on the front foot with our service design and response at all times. Working collaboratively allowed us to bring in additional recruitment capacity at speed. Our response was a significant recruitment campaign for NHSP and really showcased the incredible effort from our staff, attracting 60,000 applications and recruiting 20,000 clinicians in just 21 days.

Looking forward

The pandemic has driven the pace of change and we intend to stay agile. We have the right people around the table from a range of professional backgrounds and we are getting things done at the right pace. Across the wider NHS, we are now starting to see the formation of a centralised plan, something the pandemic has enabled to be prioritised and fast-tracked. With the removal of NHS 'silos' and organisational barriers, we now have the opportunity to work more collaboratively and flexibly.

In 2021/22, we remain in pandemic mode and we are ready to adapt and respond to any further urgent demand for our services. But going forward, we are focused on delivering our V22 transformation programme and developing our three-year strategy.

This approach describes the type of business we want to be and how we will generate revenue - and ringfencing teams to deliver this on schedule. Agile partnerships, in terms of how we recruit and retain flexible workers, have been pivotal to our work this past year, and we aim to keep them centre stage as we take our vision forward to make our workforce even stronger.

We now have vital crisis lessons to incorporate and build upon. Our improved vision includes three clear pillars:

- **Service delivery.** This is our priority – to make sure we maintain an effective and responsive service delivery with client Trust and Bank Member satisfaction at the centre, where we get all the fundamentals right.
- **Continuation of growth.** During the pandemic we attracted 50 brand new customers, offering a variety of services and increasing our international footprint. Now we need to maintain this expansion, broadening our services, increasing our National Bank customers and capturing the imagination of new clients.
- **Sustainability.** It is imperative that we start to think about how we move into a more digital experience, mindful of effectiveness over efficiency.

In addition, we continue to measure against key performance indicators (KPIs) with a new KPI dashboard from our Board report, with targets to keep us on track to that plan. Client satisfaction and operational efficiency are key priorities and we intend to track both this year, with increased time spent on improving these outcomes.

A flexible future

This year, our Bank membership has grown by an outstanding 50,000 people, with significant learnings about how to mobilise such a large workforce quickly. We have always known our Bank Members are critical to the NHS, and as we move forward we aim to recognise and reward our flexible workforce as much as we can. One of our key aims is to launch our Training Academy, which will invest in training and development for a long-term career path for our Bank Members.

We want to grow our Bank Member retention rate, enabling everyone to work more flexibly, with the hours that suit individual lives and aspirations. We are also now putting a large amount of investment into non-clinical roles - for example, administration and clerical - which will have a significant role to play in the NHS as it recovers.

Recruiting the 'NHS Curious'

Through the year we have seen a significant rise in Bank Members new to the NHS – dubbed the 'NHS Curious' by one of our client Trusts - with programmes attracting a broader spectrum of Members from other industries. Despite lockdown restrictions we have also seen an expansion within our international recruitment capability, with a plan to recruit 4,000 overseas candidates this year, and we are also developing our care support arm – training a non-health and social care workforce into healthcare, with a significant number of jobs to fill.

We want to keep the 'NHS Curious' on board and find the right pathways and roles for these new healthcare professionals. There are more than 300 different careers in the NHS, which means there

is a role for everybody. We are passionate about nurturing new people into and within the NHS – that means fully understanding the workforce that is currently in our talent pool, especially from the Test and Trace and National Vaccination programmes. It also means striving to help people adapt their skills to fill gaps in roles and skillsets across the workforce, so we can use our people better in this uncertain future.

Growing ICS partnerships

As the NHS system comes back to some level of normality, we will become increasingly integral to the creation of Integrated Care Systems. This will involve critical thinking about how our services will roll out within ICS-scale models and diversifying our offer to social, community and primary care services.

One incredibly important new partnership agreement is with Allocate. NHS Professionals is focused on building a strong digital platform for the future of our business. This will enable us to expand our service to our existing client Trusts and Bank Members and, crucially, enable any NHS Trust or organisation that uses Health Roster or any other rostering system, to access our flexible staffing services across England.

The majority of NHS Trusts currently use Allocate as a software provider for staff rotas and roster fulfilment. When we move across to the ICS model, this will increase the amount each Trust has to pay to extract and utilise data and share resources. However, our new partnership deal with Allocate will enable client Trusts to access the system to manipulate and extract data themselves – which will be of enormous benefit.



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Recognising and rewarding our people

Engagement with staff has been and continues to be high, despite restrictions and a new way of working for the majority of us. The Board and I remain incredibly proud of the effort levels, willingness, and flexibility of our own staff, and we aim to do everything we can to recognise and reward this – from small gestures such as an NHSP pin badge to longer-term retention and career development plans.

Many of our staff embraced new roles and tasks they had not encountered before. One immediate priority during the early stages of the pandemic became vetting – and many staff stepped up to help with this across the organisation. We also initiated a ‘Gold, Silver, Bronze’ command structure from the end of March 2020. While this was difficult for staff at first, it soon turned into operational cadence, making a real difference to the pace at which we were able to work.

We have seen teams come together really well, removing silos and sharing valuable experience so that we could all adapt and deliver different types of work.

This approach brought benefits and helped us retain our staff, with our people increasing in confidence in their growing skillsets.

Across the whole of this past year, we have made sure to put our own staff’s wellbeing at the forefront of everything we do. Due to the rapid pace of work, it was essential we gave people time to reflect and rebalance. This is why we introduced initiatives like ‘MyTime’ – to provide everyone with 30 minutes extra to do something for themselves, from resting to walking to meditation. We also promoted walk-and-talk meetings once a day to encourage everyone to get out from behind their desks.

Passion for the NHS

Although 2020/21 has been hugely challenging, out of it has come energy and a sense of excitement about what the future holds: investing in our people and our business, ensuring our corporate functions stay high-performing and healthy, and expanding our workforce. Above all, the pandemic has only deepened our passion for the NHS and our mission to support its journey towards fully person-centred, sustainable care.

We have already started achieving key elements of V22 to optimise and expand our service offering; support the NHS Long Term Plan and NHS People Plan; meet the market demands of Trusts and our flexible workers; and proactively address NHS workforce pressures. We have significantly improved on longer-term planning and client delivery, as well as effectively applying key learnings from the pandemic so far.

What we have now is a chance to reset – to apply this unique experience of managing delivery through a crisis to our future way of working for the benefit of the NHS and its people. I look forward to growing the significant new partnerships we’ve formed in the past year and bringing all the potential these hold to full fruition as we move into 2022/23.



Nicola McQueen,
Chief Executive Officer

The pandemic has only deepened our passion for the NHS and our mission to support its journey towards fully person-centred, sustainable care.

Standing with the NHS in its hour of need

We became a key partner to the Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, both during the initial emergency phase in Spring 2020 and as it progressed through 2020/21. In this section we describe the year’s landmark NHSP projects.

MARCH 2020: RAPID RESPONSE

We launched our Rapid Response service to support the NHS as infections rose and pressure on intensive care beds increased.

The service was backed by a national multi-channel awareness campaign – “Stand Up, Step Forward, Save Lives” – and it was delivered in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI). It aimed to fast-track retired, trainee and private sector healthcare professionals on to the NHS front line, with a streamlined and clinically robust onboarding process. We were also able to make our Bank Members available to 50 additional NHS Trusts across England to further support the pandemic response.

The campaign attracted more than 60,000 applications and delivered 20,000 healthcare professionals to front line care settings by May 2020.



Award-winning

We were delighted to win a national award for our work at Warrington Hospital in partnership with the Trust, through our Rapid Response Programme, where we had a high number of professionals ready to work within the hospital.



“Going back into nursing wasn’t an option for me, as it had been 11 years since I’d worked on the wards. So I volunteered to work shifts as a care support worker on the COVID-19 ward at Pinderfields Hospital. Thankfully, a lot of what I knew came flooding back.”

Helen Michael, Nurse Lead, NHSP



APRIL 2020: NIGHTINGALE HOSPITALS



Our Chief Nurse, **Juliette Cosgrove**, was seconded to Nightingale North West as Chief Nurse and Deputy CEO.

We were asked to recruit a bank of skilled healthcare professionals to staff the Nightingale Hospitals North West, Yorkshire and Humber, South West and London.

We launched a new awareness campaign to attract workers with the right skill mix, experience and qualifications and fast-tracked workers in with a streamlined and robust onboarding process.

The campaign attracted 11,000 applications and we recruited a broad range of essential staff including doctors, therapists, nurses, pharmacists, healthcare support workers and managers.

MAY 2020:

TEST AND TRACE

As COVID-19 spread, we were once again asked to step forward and collaborate with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) to resource an agile Test and Trace workforce.

While PHE and NHSBSA handled testing and technology infrastructure, we launched an awareness campaign and sourced, recruited and onboarded healthcare workers from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines.

In partnership with PHE, we developed a clinically assured staffing model to identify, screen and deploy Clinical Contact Caseworkers, who contacted patients within 24 hours of a positive test, including those with urgent safeguarding and clinical needs. We also recruited a number of team leaders and clinical leads to further support the initiative.

In total, we recruited 10,000 workers in three weeks, tracing more than eight million close contacts.



“When you listen to the stories, the calls to our case workers, team leaders and clinical leads, you can see how lives have been saved.”

Eva Sinclair, Customer Director, NHSP

SUMMER-WINTER 2020:

NATIONAL VACCINATION PROGRAMME



We engaged with DHSC and NHSEI to plan vaccinator recruitment for a pan-England programme and were appointed to attract, screen and train a pool of candidates that Trusts could draw on to support their own workforce supply.

We launched an awareness and attraction campaign, designed an interview and assessment video module and screened and trained candidates to ensure compliance.

From more than 200,000 initial applications and following screening and assessments, we delivered around 17,000 vaccinators to NHS Trusts across England over a five-month period and held 5,000 more approved candidates in reserve to deploy when required.

MARCH 2021 – PRESENT DAY:

VACCINATION OPERATION SUPPORT TEAM (VOST)

We were asked to take over the mobile vaccinators programme from Armed Forces personnel, so they could resume normal duties.

Using protocols and experience from the National Vaccination Programme, we set up a dedicated microsite for the VOST programme and ringfenced a team of 15 specialist healthcare recruiters who worked regionally with more than 40 NHS Trust system lead employers across England.

To date, we have received more than 1,000 applications from registered healthcare professionals and we are also sourcing staff from our Rapid Response, Test and Trace and National Vaccination talent pools as extra support.

1.2 INNOVATING THROUGH A CRISIS

“Nothing is as effective as a crisis to force change and innovation.”

Nicola McQueen, Chief Executive Officer, NHSP

From the start of 2020/21, NHS Professionals stepped up to answer the call for help in a national emergency, continuing to respond to a range of challenges through both waves of the pandemic. With the required speed and agility to get the job done, we recruited and deployed thousands of healthcare professionals and support workers into a range of roles. As the NHS proceeds to cope with unpredictable demand, and we move towards future national workforce programmes, our agility as an organisation remains paramount to flex and adapt to rapid change, as and when it arises.

Shift in demand

As a business, we are well-versed in operating under constant and unpredictable change, but the pandemic particularly shone a light on how we can grow our services to better suit demand and create even more agile partnerships, while continuing to maintain quality and safety.

In Spring 2020, almost overnight, hospitals discharged as many patients as they could from acute care, refocusing as much resource as possible to critical care and COVID-19 response wards. It meant additional workforce was needed and NHSP moved very quickly to offering a Rapid Response workforce from existing and new Bank Members. Around 95% of our client Trusts took this up as a concept for a multitude of roles within the workforce.

This past financial year has been defined by working with agility, collaboration and innovation to deliver the support the NHS needs, at speed. At NHSP, we had to find better ways of doing things, to shift our thinking and come up with new, improved solutions – to ensure we provided easy access to the right skills, at the right time.

We needed to adapt on a regional basis as hospital wards were repurposed depending on virus levels, while ensuring there was consistency of support nationwide.

This meant responding with a range of solutions to fit, with a speedy understanding of how we might do things differently. From moving outpatient appointments and community nursing online, with Bank nurses working virtually, to looking at longer-term placements and new ways to offer support.

In addition, clear conversations with Trusts were key in reassuring everyone involved that the campaigns would not be taking people out of any essential business as usual activity.

With so many professionals working from home, inductions had to take place remotely, with virtual interviews and added input to ensure the care and resilience of the workforce.

By Summer 2020, we began to start talking to Trusts about their recovery, restore and reset. We were able to come to the table with different solutions and strategies for dealing with delayed services and recovering from the backlog.

“The pandemic demanded that we be resourceful, creative and innovative in building new infrastructure and working with our partners. I couldn’t be prouder of what the team has achieved.”

Mike Ruddle, Chief Commercial Officer, NHSP



From June 2020, placement requests received from our NHS Trusts increased by 50%. In November alone, we delivered around 400,000 hours of non-clinical support to the NHS. This is the highest demand recorded for our Bank Members.

Change of mindset

The pandemic has shown us the importance of flexible working and why easier access to roles in the NHS is critical, to support the aspirations of all healthcare professionals. It was this change in mindset that enabled us to find the right people to fill the right roles during the pandemic, from the Rapid Response recruitment campaigns to support for the Nightingale Hospitals.

Much of our focus began with workforce planning, to understand the skills available that might be deployed. There were a number of relevant groups who were out of work and potentially available for new roles. For example, cabin crews are first-aid trained and skilled in

dealing with high pressure situations, and dental hygienists are already equipped to operate within clinical environments and deal with complex clinical information. In fact, the sheer variety and flexibility of people that stepped forward to support the NHS was staggering.

Our agility was strengthened through internal partnerships, garnering support and ideas from many people across our business to formulate solutions for varying challenges. From creating shifts that were not traditional roster times, such as over lunchtime to help patients with meals, to shifts that were more convenient for working parents around schooling commitments.

“One of the things I’ve learnt from the past year and from my three months on the front line working as Chief Nurse at Nightingale North West, is understanding what actually needs to be done, not just the roles that need to be filled. This is a really important distinction.”

*Juliette Cosgrove,
Chief Nurse
and Director
of Clinical
Governance,
NHSP*



Clear communication

As the needs of Trusts increased and changed during the pandemic, clear communication and effective engagement became more critical to meet various operational issues and to ensure we had all the workforce planning tools our clients needed.

It was vital we remained open to change as the situation evolved. A number of challenges continued to arise, including supporting workers who became ill with COVID-19 and trying to understand the varying impact of absences on the service. We quickly adapted our offer to Trusts and healthcare professionals to support everyone involved with patient delivery. For example, we developed and delivered technology to allow Bank Members to risk assess themselves for COVID-19, as well as enhancing our risk assessment processes with the right level of support and guidance to ensure everyone remained safe and protected.

First and foremost, it was imperative we quickly understood what the Trusts needed, to efficiently fill the gaps where COVID-19 was having a significant impact. For instance, one hospital required front door helpers, termed ‘face mask buddies’, to ensure people wore face masks; while another needed an increase in domestic staff due to the rapid increase in providing a clean, safe environment.

Effective deployment was also key to our response. For instance, to meet the national shortage in critical care skills and to support the critical care system in one hospital, we deployed staff who acted as supportive members of the team to free up specialists. We also developed an upskilling agreement for Bank Member nurses who had an interest in critical care.

In addition, soon after the first peak of the virus, we started to see an anticipated demand for unregistered Bank Members to help with rehabilitation going forward, quickly recruiting 100 care support workers for one Trust through our Care Support Workers Development Programme.

“As NHSP rapidly recruited to support the pandemic in a really short space of time, we had many conversations with Trusts facing phenomenal demands on resources, so we could clearly understand how we could make it work, and get more of the right people into the NHS.”

*Christine Wilkinson,
Regional Director, NHSP*



NHSP pandemic 'command structure'

The operational response called for considerable thought leadership, innovation and thinking differently – all in close collaboration with a range of partners. Adapting speedily and in partnership with the whole of the NHS was paramount. The pandemic emergency meant we quickly chose to use a different and more agile 'Bronze, Silver, Gold' command structure to help make rapid, effective decisions. There were multiple projects that needed to be addressed, and communication became more vital than ever.

The process highlighted the need to work more collectively across the business, rather than in silos. From stand-ups every day to regular round robins, the onus from early on was to pivot our entire organisation to respond at pace to whatever need came along. There needed to be an organisation-wide push to respond to demand and client needs across numerous targeted campaigns with smooth, effective processes that were quickly put in place.

Mel Simmonds, Director of Bank Member Engagement, who led the business response for the Silver command structure, said: *"When the pandemic hit, we had to respond rapidly and set up the command structures with a much more streamlined way of communicating across the business, from executive level out to all our teams.*

It meant changing the way we communicated in an instant to ensure we were agile and responsive, turning our attention to the key priorities facing us, from the health and well-being of internal teams and Bank Members to health and safety or deployment against client requirements.

From weekly collaborative meetings across a range of areas of expertise to strategy work, we were able to deliver through a new lens of engagement that was achievement focused."

1.3 MAINTAINING SAFE CARE

Integral to the pandemic effort during the year was maintaining our clinical governance work with Trusts, to ensure everyone could be assured of safety, quality and high standards.

Compliance is a vital part of all our services at NHSP. In close collaboration with Trusts, we now run compliance as a service, using our expertise to deliver in-house checks and training, to provide greater compliance assurance.

Improving safety and quality

Strong governance continued to be pivotal to maintain the high standards of practice of all our Bank Members during the pandemic. Assuring safe and effective care is about what competencies people have within their roles and this remained fundamental to our focus as we adapted to thinking differently about the skills that were required. As we expanded the numbers of our Bank Members,

our priority was to bring new people onboard as effectively and safely as possible with the best outcomes for everyone.

As the situation evolved quickly and with so many checks, legislation and guidance to conduct, we had to ensure we understood what a reasonable compromise in a pandemic looked like, and how we could speed up the compliance process without compromising on safety - from using video checks as an alternative, to finding a faster way to check DBS status.

Ensuring easy access to the right skills meant a careful balancing act between the pressures to fill roles fast and flexibly and upholding clinical and operational governance. For instance, for programmes like Test and Trace, we had to make sure the right communication skills were in place for those clinical professionals having difficult conversations in an unplanned and unscripted way.

We had to quickly recognise what was not safe and what extra support and training was necessary. We kept all of this under review and where we felt we needed to improve we swiftly did so. As the pressures receded, we undertook remedial work accordingly as new guidance was issued, such as returning to face-to-face training.

"When the pandemic hit, we had to respond rapidly and set up a command structure with a much more streamlined way of communicating across the business."

*Mel Simmonds,
Director of
Bank Member
Engagement,
NHSP*



CASE STUDY: NHS Nightingale Hospital North West

NHSP played a key role in the rapid staffing of the NHS Nightingale Hospital North West. Over a fortnight in April 2020, the Manchester Central Convention Complex was transformed into a 648-bed capacity field hospital. Its main purpose was to provide care to patients recovering from COVID-19, while the region's large acute hospitals focused on critical care.

While infrastructure work was underway, NHSP and other local and national healthcare organisations set to work on recruiting hundreds of qualified and skilled staff to make sure patients received safe, high quality care. There were two immediate priorities: first, to fully staff one ward of 36 beds, and second, to avoid destabilising workforces in other NHS Trusts.

NHSP recruited many doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and pharmacists. With other organisations, NHSP provided CVs for review by the hospital's management team and those selected were followed up with a telephone interview.

Applicants were drawn from a range of backgrounds – for example, retired consultants and junior doctors returning early from work overseas. Nurses and midwives who had left

the register within the last three years were able to join NHSP and be fully inducted as 'returners' after the Government granted the Nursing Midwifery Council emergency powers to establish a temporary register.

Workforce progress and operational issues were tracked with weekly management meetings, twice-weekly workforce 'huddles' and daily 'incident huddles'.

Fortunately, the NHS North West's critical care capacity was never breached, and the Nightingale Hospital needed to use only a fraction of its capacity between April and June, when it was stood down. It created a vital 'buffer zone' for the North West and brought NHSP and other local and national partners together to successfully crisis-recruit, train and deploy a safe and high-performing healthcare workforce, increasing resilience for the future.

Juliette Cosgrove, NHSP Chief Nurse and Director of Clinical Governance and Nightingale North West's Chief Nurse and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, said: *"The quality of the workforce and the speed at which they were deployed ensured that the patients we had were kept safe and achieved good outcomes."*

1.4 PANDEMIC WORKFORCE

“In 2020/21, as a result of a tremendous team effort, we filled more than one million Bank hours.”

Ana Skerrett, Business Manager, Allied Health Professionals/ Healthcare Scientists and Personal Social Services, NHSP

COVID-19 has demonstrated the urgent and continuing need for available, flexible healthcare professionals. Thankfully the additional capacity of the Nightingale Hospitals was not needed and many NHS Trusts provided only essential care. This meant some of our new Bank Members were initially placed on standby. But as cases continued to rise and the National Vaccination Programme began, we quickly saw an increase in demand for flexible shifts.

Through our pandemic recruitment campaigns, 50,000 new workers were attracted to NHSP – an increase of 46% to our Bank size, bringing our membership to approximately 180,000.

Demand came from all sides – clinical and non-clinical - and due to our diverse workforce and national reach, we were able to meet this demand with a steady supply of nurses (including international), doctors, allied health professionals and non-clinical workers.

Nurses and midwives

Like many health and care workers, our nursing and midwifery Bank Members were required on the pandemic front line. NHSP’s corporate nursing team stood up beside our Members to provide guidance, support and solidarity during such uncertain and worrying times.

We continually prepared protocols and guidance at every stage as the pandemic unfolded and took up key senior roles in NHSP’s ‘Gold, Silver, Bronze’ command structure. To ensure we were inextricably linked to the NHS, we had twice-daily calls with NHSEI so we were ready to share new guidance or process changes with our Members without delay.

The team’s highly developed clinical leadership skills were required in abundance. For example, when the Nursing and Midwifery Council opened up a new temporary register for those who had recently retired or left the profession, we supported our recruitment teams to make sure practitioners had the appropriate skills and knowledge to maintain safety.

Our Bank Members also required specific instructions and training guides, not just on infection prevention but a whole new knowledge base on COVID-19: transmission, signs and symptoms and especially the wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and minimising the risks of contracting and transmitting the virus. To support this, we opened a clinical resources page on the NHSP website so all new and emerging learning could be accessed quickly and easily.

In addition, we helped to develop Test and Trace training modules so we were prepared to launch a new service with new protocols and procedures, and we continued supporting NHSP’s recruitment teams to vet applications to the Test and Trace service.

Allied health professionals

Every one of our healthcare professionals has played a vital role in the pandemic, providing high quality care working across a range of clinical placements in acute, mental health and community hospitals.

With the overseas workforce temporarily halted and high pressure on our healthcare professionals, we needed to urgently grow our community, especially with additional numbers of allied health professional (AHP) staff to work on and alongside the NHS front line. While we continued to attract Bank Members, we also had to pull out every stop to fill ever-expanding roles with different experience. The result was an ongoing round of resourcing and talent attraction campaigns and utilising all means possible for referrals.

NHSP was soon working quickly to fill gaps and attract AHP candidates for wide-ranging roles and vacancies. This included placing physiotherapists into intensive care units to help mobilise patients to make them more comfortable; recruiting speech and language therapists; and an increased number of dieticians to help people restore nutritional balance after long periods in hospital. NHSP also helped with an acute shortage of occupational therapists to support patients to resume the activities they enjoyed before they became ill. At East Suffolk and North Essex Trust, we focused collaboration around their COVID-19 testing, recruiting over 100 biomedical scientists from scratch, holding interviews and onboarding quickly.

Initially, we were able to deploy many existing healthcare professionals into other teams within hospital settings. This meant that our Rapid Response recruitment campaign did not come into play as significantly as it did across other key areas of the NHS. However, we did see our average work rate rise from around 120 live placement requests to managing more than 500 live new requirements. Plus, we saw our internal team step up – for example, working weekends to staff the Nightingales' pharmacy requirement, with the majority sourced over the Easter Bank holiday weekend.

By working closely with Trusts, we were able to effectively utilise the flexible workers we already had. This required strategic partnership to understand how Trusts might reassign staff if they did not have the perfect match. For example, when one Trust required a senior level pharmacist that could not be sourced, we found a skilled but less experienced professional, giving the Trust the opportunity to promote a permanent member of staff internally; consequently, providing personal development while also keeping the service running.

“The pandemic meant we have significantly moved from working on campaigns within countries to recruiting through an interview on demand programme. It has made a hugely positive impact on resources, allowing for back-to-back interviews and a higher conversion from interview to delivery as we can respond more efficiently to client demand. It has meant we have increased the conversion rate from 65% to 85%.”

Hadrien Kieffer, Director, NHSP International



NHSP International (NHSPI)

Our NHS is truly an international health service. Every year we recruit thousands of international candidates and support them to work within the NHS across England, and never has there been a more critical year for recruiting from overseas than in 2020-2021.

As the pandemic caused an abrupt shift in our approach, NHSPI quickly became recognised as a main supplier of international recruitment, working in close partnership with the DHSC and NHSEI to progress towards the Government's target of 50,000 nurses by 2025.

Despite numerous challenges created by COVID-19, not least travel restrictions, we managed to achieve our recovery plan target to deliver 1,000 nurses (reduced from pre-pandemic 1,500). We also worked hand-in-hand with NHSEI to deliver some of the response programmes. These included a targeted ICU/Theatre response in the second wave of the pandemic to place 100 appropriately skilled nurses within the space of just three months. Additionally, we continued to support all our client Trusts with applications for funding and co-ordinating a continuous professional development series of webinars.

This year saw us growing our client base from 15 to 33 NHS Trusts. We worked in close collaboration with three core regions, including large systems such as Merseyside, on their international recruitment. We are now looking forward to growing into new regions, including the Midlands and London.

“To have an impact and play a part in looking after the nation: there is no greater cause and purpose to be aligned to.”

Leah Boxell, Chief of Staff, NHSP



CASE STUDY: Nottingham University Hospitals

NHSP International's relationship with Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH) started in December 2019, when we were asked to recruit 400 overseas nurses across a range of specialties at NUH's two main sites.

To maintain patient safety, the Trust wanted to fill the vacancies as soon as possible, but it was also keen to support the nurses through onboarding so they passed any required assessments and stayed with Nottingham long-term – and this is where NHSPI came in.

We drew up a robust recruitment plan after working closely with NUH's senior nursing team, learning and development, human resources and finance departments to understand current and previous issues with international recruitment.

Comfortable working at pace, NHSPI rapidly organised a strategic campaign in India, followed by video interview sessions and regular updates to the Trust. The initial plan was to deploy up to 31 nurses every three weeks - the maximum capacity at NUH's on-site accommodation. This three-week rotation allowed for 10 days of quarantine and deep cleaning between cohorts.

By March 2020, 101 job offers had been made, with 162 more soon after, bringing the total job offers made to 263. The first cohort of 27 arrived from India in March, with 158 more arriving over the year, despite travel restrictions. Work to boost nurse numbers up to NUH's target continued with regular video interviews.

NHSPI handled the campaign's administration from start to finish and supported the Trust to understand the new pandemic travel guidelines. We also made sure accommodation could be used for quarantine; set up a WhatsApp support group for new nurses; and sorted food deliveries.

Handling the logistical and human side of onboarding freed up the Trust to focus on clinical onboarding and induction. This partnership enhanced the Trust's capacity to onboard overseas nurses successfully so they settled quickly and happily into life at the Trust.

Emma Toby, NHSP's International Recruitment Manager, said: *“NHSPI is a partner, not an agency, so we work hard to understand the Trust's needs and ask the right questions. Our priority at Nottingham wasn't just to land the nurses at the Trust – we wanted to retain them, so there's long-term benefit. We are always looking ahead – for example, to the next round of winter pressures – and international is a changing market, so our job is to give good advice to Trusts.”*



“Our team worked hard to deploy doctors and meet the national need. We got the right people, in the right place, at the right time. We will continue to do so as the need for qualified, professional and highly trained doctors remains a top priority for our country and the NHS.” James Orr, Managing Director, Doctors Direct, part of NHSP

Doctors

Doctors Direct, NHSP's dedicated locum service, continues as a significant growth area. Agility has been pivotal to our growth this year, attracting new doctors by working closely with the DHSC and client Trusts to ensure supply matched requirement throughout the pandemic. As our 'Bank Only' doctors reached record levels, we adapted quickly to offer the kind of support all our doctors required.

In March 2020, we asked doctors to “Stand Up, Step Forward and Save Lives” and the speed of response we received was beyond all expectations, with an incredible volume of doctors answering the call to help. From April 2020 to March 2021, for instance, the number of Bank doctors working via Doctors Direct rose by 1,650 to more than 10,000.

Naturally there was a level of complexity we had to strive to overcome and resolve in a short period of time. In the early weeks of the pandemic, it became imperative to understand the flexible medical resource required by the NHS. There was also a dip in 'business as usual' activity, as standard services and elective procedures were cancelled, which meant the demand for doctors in some areas fell while others rose and some doctors who stepped up were not initially required.

In the face of this uncertainty, we needed to deliver a responsive and agile service. It was a learning process, and we improved our systems to increase the speed we deployed doctors without compromising on quality and safety.

Doctors Direct also helped to staff the Nightingale Hospitals, including Nightingale North West in Manchester, where 38 doctors were recruited (see case study, page 21). Our success was a true reflection of what can be achieved when we all work together within the NHS. The experience also provided key learnings on the importance of understanding the specific needs of a field hospital and how to quickly adapt in the future to changing situations.

In addition to recruitment, we also supported Nightingale sites in varying capacities, including sharing our learnings and model for a consistent and robust rapid response. Due to our work setting up the Nightingale Hospitals, we have developed our relationships with new Trusts to provide further opportunities for doctors in the future.

“We were mobilising new roles, often within a 24-hour period, swiftly moving from recruiting for the usual administrative, clerical and estate teams to supporting a lot of different people into roles to help the NHS in its hour of need. The message became clear; that we don't just recruit for the familiar roles, but many other specialties, and especially at a more senior level.”

Antony Law, Director of Non-Clinical Recruitment, NHSP



Non-clinical

At the beginning of the pandemic, there was little demand for non-clinical flexible workers, due to an NHS strategy that all non-essential staff work from home where possible.

However, as the country emerged from the initial lockdown from July 2020 onwards, NHSP worked closely with the NHS and client Trusts to understand how we might help to bring the non-clinical workforce back into hospitals, as well as recruiting for a number of new roles. Examples included recruiting for a range of domestic professionals to ensure each hospital was sanitised effectively and in line with COVID-19 guidelines.

In addition, with many people suddenly working from home, NHSP also witnessed a significant spike in recruitment of IT professionals. We acted fast to mobilise large IT teams and, as part of the NHS digital strategy, we also began recruiting more flexible workers into the digital space to match the growing demand within Trusts.

We saw the creation of new high demand roles across summer 2020, notably within our estates and facilities team, which had previously been one of our smaller areas. An area of growth was recruitment of 'runners', who were employed to take COVID-19 tests to and from the labs, playing a vital role in managing the virus. Another was family liaison co-ordinators, who provided that vital connection for families unable to visit their loved ones, ensuring patients could still communicate on the phone or online.

In the run up to the second peak in autumn 2020, with cases rising at an exponential rate each day and families still unable to visit hospitals, we worked with many Trusts to recruit security guards and 'door guardians'. Many joined from furloughed or redundant roles, such as door and on-site security. Roles such as these were critical in helping hospitals control the virus within the hospital as well as within communities.

RAPID EXPANSION

This year we delivered five million hours of work for our non-clinical members, working with almost 8,000 non-clinical workers. As a result of this rapid expansion within our non-clinical Bank Member community, we also increased our team, from 26 to 40.

Moving forward, we want to ensure our Bank Member offer is sustainable, so when a Member joins NHSP non-clinical, they can choose placement opportunities and look forward to developing a career with us. This also means accessing the same additional training and development platforms as those used by our internal colleagues.

Growing our Bank Member workforce

“Ultimately we want to be viewed as a career partner for our workforce, moving towards a more personalised approach, enabling us to engage our Members in how we can provide effective, hands-on support to them throughout their career journey.”

Mike Ruddle,
Chief Commercial
Officer, NHSP

2.1 BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The pandemic has emphasised the importance of a workforce that is able to flex up and down with demand. Our Bank Members are a key part of that essential workforce, covering a full range of healthcare professionals including nursing, midwifery, allied health professionals, doctors and non-clinical workers, as well as an increasing cohort from overseas.

The unprecedented response from professionals who stepped forward during the pandemic has rapidly grown our Bank Member community. It has enriched us with a large talent pool of people who are curious to work in the NHS – emphasising how flexible workers are critical to our future of delivering the required level and standard of patient care.

This year was all about working closely with both new and existing Bank Members to quickly adapt and improve our offer. It was also focused on ensuring the relationship with our Bank Members continued to evolve and develop so that they can grow as professionals and people – from the moment we receive an application, through to finding the right placements and supporting ongoing development.

Shifting needs

Knowing how difficult it can be to find Bank Members that match specific needs, this year we worked closely with Trusts to make sure we clearly identified the skills needed on a shift to help improve the Bank Member experience. For example, early career and student nurses were

able to access shifts and locations that suited their professional skills and aspirations.

We also developed initiatives with Trusts to include school hour shifts and a flex pool where people can split or share shifts to fill gaps. And for those who wanted them, we began offering more placement opportunities that allowed members to fully utilise skills and provide increased security, along with flexibility. Our research told us that time, location and familiarity of the ward and hospital in which Bank Members work are important, particularly for those at the beginning or towards the end of their career. So we are working with Trusts to improve basic information given about a ward before a shift – such as whether a break is included.



“Candidates like to talk to someone who can talk their language and understand their specialism and particular motivation. It also develops stronger relationships that in turn help to grow our Bank membership.”

Ana Skerrett, Business Manager, Allied Health Professionals/Healthcare Scientists and Personal Social Services, NHSP



Despite the speed and volume of the pandemic response, we worked hard to uphold the value and importance of getting the basics right for when our Bank Members – such as nurses and midwives - start a new role or shift. Key to this was working closely with Trusts to ensure there is always a named person to greet Bank Members and answer questions when they arrive on a ward. In addition, our Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Awards recognise Bank Members who go above and beyond in their roles.

Doctors Direct: specialty focus

The ultimate aim of Doctors Direct, as we continue to expand, is to adopt a dual focus: achieving overarching delivery for our clients, with the right doctors in the right roles at the right time, while also growing our specialty focus, with dedicated teams for specialist expertise.

While a flexible workforce of skilled doctors is clearly a force of strength for the NHS, we firmly believe it must work both ways for it to be most effective and beneficial to all. This is why our focus this past year has been to ensure there is a mutual benefit for both the NHS Trusts and our doctors. For example, while our Bank Member doctors need to be easily accessible and available with the right skills, doctors also need to be able to fit shifts around their lifestyle and other responsibilities.

We have been working with doctors as they progress through their career, finding work for those who have responded to the campaigns for help through the pandemic and facilitating any extra training needs. Specialisms have become key to our relationships with doctors and client Trusts, and we have expanded our specialist knowledge, matching doctors to roles across mental health, psychiatry and acute settings.

“Being a success in the NHS isn’t just about qualifications and experience; it is also about cultural fit, asking the right questions and showing empathy and understanding with every conversation at every part of a doctor’s journey. Demonstrating the right levels of support and guidance to our candidates and in partnership with our clients is essential.”

James Orr, Managing Director, Doctors Direct



Subject matter experts

In order to optimise our responsiveness to the pandemic and our Bank Member needs, we restructured and invested in the whole allied health professionals/ healthcare scientist/personal social services team, introducing a new layer of expertise and moving towards a vertical structure of specialisms, rather than being geographically focused.

We are now developing subject matter experts within teams, from therapies and mental health to healthcare science and radiography, supported by a large resourcing team. It means our Bank Members, as well as the hiring managers at our Trusts, can be assured they will speak to someone who understands their area of expertise and comprehends the range of tasks for any specific specialist role.



Smooth onboarding

Our international Gateway programme continues to support doctors who have completed their medical degrees abroad to gain the relevant, hands-on experience needed to start a career in the NHS, ensuring the NHS has access to a continuous pipeline of skilled and qualified doctors. We have worked hard to give a warm welcome and an efficient, smooth onboarding to those international doctors arriving in the UK to start their NHS careers.

Just before Christmas 2020, we began work to deliver up to 2,000 regional nurses into the NHS by April 2021. To achieve this, we bolstered capacity to interview across the beginning of 2021, achieving 750 interviews a month.

Subsequently, job offers were made and, while there have been some delays due to country lockdowns, we welcomed 250 nurses into the NHS as planned.

Alongside recruitment and delivery, a significant number of support mechanisms were put in place, not least ensuring we provided individual tailored support. We worked tirelessly to ensure every international healthcare professional received the best possible experience – from application and interview to managing quarantine and pastoral care, to arriving at their new workplace setting. We will keep striving to make the journey as simple as possible so that valued, qualified professionals can join our NHSP community and the NHS quickly.

As our international recruitment practice changes in accordance with DHSC strategy, more countries are now opening for potential recruitment with others temporarily paused. The pandemic has demonstrated the importance of adapting and not relying too heavily on one country. We are diversifying the countries we recruit from, now working across Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa and Hong Kong.

In addition, we are seeking to fill midwifery roles with a campaign in Europe, working closely with Talent Beyond Boundaries to run a displaced talent programme, which helps Syrian refugee nurses currently based in the Lebanon to come to work for the NHS on a permanent basis.

Our Member Promise

“We promise to welcome, support and celebrate our Bank Members as part of our flexible working community; benefiting their lifestyle, their career and our NHS.”

Mel Simmonds, Director of Bank Member Engagement, NHSP

Our dedicated Bank Members are not only the life blood of NHS Professionals, but also an essential part of the NHS. Our Member Promise is about ensuring a smooth and enjoyable experience for our Bank Members and we want it to guide all our interactions with Bank Members. It's about supporting them through their journey and making them feel proud to be part of NHSP. It's also about showing how much we value them by interacting in clear, concise, conversational and caring ways.

In late 2020, NHSP had already agreed an all-new and robust Bank Member engagement strategy, but ongoing urgent pandemic workforce demands delayed its full implementation before the end of the financial year. However, this delay, and the added insights into Member engagement the pandemic has given us, have made our strategy even stronger.

One key insight we've learned, for example, is that any learning and development to enhance our Bank community can be delivered in more innovative ways. As we began to expand the roles for which we recruit and fill to support the pandemic effort – from safety roles to 'bed buddies' – we became clearer on the need to provide career development and additional inclusive learning opportunities to suit everyone.

By enhancing what we offer to Bank Members, we can increase development opportunities and training for different roles. Ultimately, this will also help improve patient outcomes, freeing up other professionals.

Now is the time to start understanding what motivates each of our Bank Members, from the cabin crews who joined us in the pandemic to our long-standing Bank Members.

In late 2019, NHSP conducted some research to understand the aspirations and needs of our Bank Members (see box, right).

This was highly important in setting our strategy going forward and put us in a strong position to help deliver the right service and experience in 2020/21.

Integral to ensuring we meet our Bank Member needs is understanding what they want from their roles and shifts. There were some key themes emerging from our research that signposted us to the way forward in delivering the best Bank Member experience possible for those working in the NHS, or indeed, those wanting to work in the NHS this year and beyond.

NHSP nurse and midwifery research: key findings

85% of mid-career nurses said they want to work hours that suit family and lifestyle requirements

Nurses late in their career:

45% said they want to gain new experience and skills

81% want different shift patterns

76% want to work in more locations

Many flexible workers use Bank shifts to top up their substantive roles

Studying and newly qualified nurses want to gain experience while earning

Only 36% of late career nurses told us that pay rates were a priority when choosing a shift

WORKFORCE INSIGHTS

75% of our **pandemic workforce** want to remain on the NHSP Bank

50% of workers would **prefer to work flexibly across several Trusts** and gain more varied learning opportunities

95% are **prepared to learn new skills** which might be needed by the NHS in the future

73% of our workforce will **commit to working front line shifts at least once a fortnight** (41% every week and 20% daily)

60% of workers are **qualified nurses, doctors or midwives**



2.2 HEALTH AND WELLBEING

“I believe community is an essential aspect of health and wellbeing. Our Bank Members deserve a community where they can engage with each other, develop their skills and take care of themselves, ensuring they can build on the resilience they depended on during the pandemic to avoid burnout.”

Juliette Cosgrove, Chief Nurse and Director of Clinical Governance, NHSP

This past year, more than any, it has been vital to support the wellbeing and resilience of all our Bank Members.

The pandemic has showcased the dedication and commitment of people across the NHS but research also suggests many have also experienced mental health issues as a result. Therefore, at NHSP, we have made sure there are a range of health and wellbeing resources available to our Bank Members through our Health and Wellbeing Hub, which provides resources, ideas and guidance. Bank Members also raised funds to support Rethink Mental Illness this year, providing the wellbeing hub with mental health resources.

When feedback from our Members highlighted the importance of reward and recognition to the health and wellbeing of a flexible workforce, we duly expanded our Going the Extra Mile (GEM) Awards to champion their outstanding efforts. Initially recognising nursing and midwifery staff, the GEM awards now acknowledge the achievement of all staff groups who go above and beyond in their roles, including AHPs and non-clinical roles.

Flexibility as a career choice

With flexible working now a real career choice, we are committed to offering opportunities for development to people who choose to work flexibly. This year has seen us champion a people-centred approach that benefits the flexible worker and the Trust, as well as contributing to the continuity of patient care. Through our work this year, and while setting up the Nightingale Hospitals, we have established relationships with new Trusts, opening up opportunities for our Bank Members in the future.

Our Bank Members have told us that it is sometimes difficult to find shifts that match their specific skills. We are working closely with all our client Trusts to ensure we identify the skills needed to help improve the Bank Member experience and support patient care. Breaking this issue down further, early career and student nurses – a critical demographic – will be able to access shifts and locations that suit their skills and development needs in a more streamlined way as we continue to focus on improving our technology platforms that support staffing in the long term.



2.3 CAREER PATHS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“We have a vision for education and training for the future, to ensure our members are fully equipped and skilled to work in healthcare. An example of this vision is the development of the Care Support Worker Development Programme, to enable our members to be reflective practitioners.” Lisa Maclean, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHSP

“From finding candidates, to their first day and beyond, we must ensure that all those wanting work in the NHS know that there is a full career pathway ahead of them. Recruitment in the NHS is about professional progression, new practices, pastoral care, clinical pathways and, most importantly, people – something we should never forget.”

James Orr, Managing Director, Doctors Direct

We are developing a Competency Framework which will define the skills and knowledge base required for each level within nursing - from unregistered practitioners such as care support workers, to registered advanced practitioners. This will provide a career structure for our members with ‘step on’ ‘step off’ points throughout.

Consequently, we have been busy growing opportunities for continued professional development (CPD) and career pathways for our Bank Member community. This is to improve the development opportunities we provide and demonstrate to our Members how much we value and want to invest in them, as part of the NHSP team. We have been also working alongside key partners to develop a unique learning and development platform to give our Bank Members access to training and the latest career development tools to meet their long-term goals. This will support the skills needed in the NHS from a system-wide perspective. In time, our vision is to roll this out to non-clinical roles, where competencies will be just as important.

All this work and focus will relate to where people are in their career and their aspirations. For many, we know that additional training, beyond the standard mandatory requirement, is well received, as well as the associated learning opportunities available.

We have also been developing education and training programmes which are fit for purpose, and contemporaneous. For example, designing special courses for working with children and young people within mental health settings, as well as looking at conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques.

Learning for doctors

Working with our internal Doctors Direct team and in collaboration with its client Trusts, we know how important it is to understand the candidates’ needs first, particularly with younger doctors at the beginning of their career journey. Therefore, we actively listened to our doctors when they told us they needed support this year, especially with ongoing learning and development.

Our Lockdown Lectures and Doctors Direct webinars this year have featured an array of eminent speakers, including Dr JD Polk, the Medical Director of NASA. The lectures not only provided an opportunity to earn CPD points, but they enabled us to engage directly with doctors and learn more about what they need from us.

In addition, as nothing beats learning on the job, especially for junior doctors, we now provide the Rotation Initiative, giving Foundation Year 2 doctors the opportunity to work additional shifts and gain extra experience in areas they are particularly interested in, to fit around study schedules and other responsibilities. It not only progresses the careers of junior doctors but helps support the NHS with additional resource.

NHSP Training Academy

Our plans for a new Training Academy, which will sit at the heart of our education practice, are continuing to take shape. The Academy’s overarching aim is to take the pressure off the clinical world with assurance of the skills and competencies the NHS requires, while also offering our Bank Members the chance to develop their careers to fit with their lives.

Investing in our people and our business

“Although 2020/21 has been incredibly challenging, out of it has come energy and a sense of excitement about what the future holds: investing in our people and our business and ensuring our corporate functions stay high-performing and healthy.”

Nicola McQueen,
Chief Executive Officer, NHSP

3.1 STAFF WELLBEING, ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING

It has been critical in such an extraordinary year that we continue to invest in our people and our business, from employee engagement and wellbeing initiatives to improving in-house technology – both as a crisis response and for the longer-term.



We were delighted to be awarded a Top Employers certification this year from the Top Employers Institute, highlighting how NHSP strives to offer and assure best people practices for our workforce with a comprehensive package of career planning, pathways and benefits. We are especially proud to be the first NHS and second public sector organisation to be accredited, across the UK.

With such a steep increase in homeworking and with all the additional pressures of the last year, we have actively encouraged our colleagues and clients to have

‘walk and talk’ meetings where possible – to get outside in the fresh air and exercise while catching up. By looking after our own team wellbeing, we know we will be in the best possible place to look after our client Trusts and Bank Members.

We have digitised much of the employee engagement, conversations and checks we undertake within our HR team, partnering with award-winning organisations to support our employees in the best way possible.

This year saw the launch of our ‘My Engagement’ Peakon survey tool. This is an employee feedback platform that provides monthly surveys so we can regularly hear the voice of our people. It also supports our Top Employers accreditation and highlights our commitment to actively listen to everyone within our NHSP community.

At the start of 2021, we also rolled out ‘My Performance’ with Clear Review – a performance management tool, where we are able to set and measure objectives. It also enables us to conduct wellbeing and career check conversations, all within the platform, and give and receive feedback to all employees around the business.

We have continued to build on our in-house learning management system, the Institute of Learning. Throughout a challenging year, we have made it a priority to focus on our mental health and wellbeing strategy and we are in the process of creating mental health first aiders across the business.

The Institute of Learning also recently rolled out a mobile app, to ensure our people have ongoing training and development anytime, on the move and across any device.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

We have been focused on working collectively on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) with the NHS England Workforce Race and Equality team and across all the organisations we work with. We have also been working on training for marginalisation within healthcare settings and this is now a key priority on our future EDI agenda.

“At NHSP our priority is the employee journey, from career planning and pathways to reward and recognition. What we offer is based on evidence from everyone who works with us. We ask, listen and act on what our people need to continue learning, developing and reaching their potential.”

Helen McMullan, Head of Talent Management and Development, NHSP



3.2 INFRASTRUCTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

Our IT team was integral to the success of our work this year, internally and externally. It contributed to strategic thinking and formulated options and ways of operating effectively as our workforce shifted to predominately remote working. It also made sure our client Trusts were supported throughout.

With such a large volume of people booking shifts, we needed to urgently re-tune and enhance many of our core systems to cope with the sudden increase in demand. Consequently, we made several agile and incremental interventions to optimise system performance and strengthen our infrastructure.

NHS Test and Trace and the National Vaccination Programme

The priority for the IT team with these critical projects was to ringfence the work on the pandemic programmes, so that our team could also continue with the day job of booking shifts and supporting our Bank Member community. It was vital the high volumes in specific programme areas did not have a knock-on effect on business as usual.

For Test and Trace and National Vaccination, we arranged chat services within 24 hours of the crisis response plan.

The National Vaccination Programme, in particular, was a classic example of how an agile project methodology was the right tool for the job. With lots of unknowns, and without the luxury of time, we started on a solution in October 2020 to launch in November, working at pace in a controlled environment so as not to affect the rest of the business. This enabled the programme to grow and be agile in response to what people needed, making constant changes to ensure it was as easy as possible for every candidate.

“There was a real frontline spirit in the team and we had clearly defined goals. That’s how we overcame every obstacle, hit the deadlines and got thousands of people into the system. The very first nurse on the very first site - Basingstoke - was a great day for all of us!”

*Dave Callow,
Chief Information
Officer, NHSP*



Supporting the NHS to transform patient care

“The NHS People Plan highlights why the flexible worker needs to be championed. Flexible workers have always been a core resource of the NHS, enabling the service to continuously deliver the highest standards of patient care. As we try and plan for an uncertain future, we are going to need flexible workers to fulfil the ongoing workforce demands on the NHS.”

Nicola McQueen, Chief Executive Officer, NHSP

4.1 AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE

We believe a flexible workforce is pivotal to the future of the NHS, especially as it now moves into a new era of more integrated, place-based and people-centred care. As a result of our work this past year, we now have an even stronger relationship with the DHSC, enjoying conversations with their flexible staffing department and planning what we can do to create more flexibility for the NHS workforce as a whole.

While the NHS was starting to see change emerging, the arrival of the pandemic has brought a faster pace of transformation. As the NHS People Plan states, the key challenge now is to keep building on this momentum and continuing to transform – for example, turning plans for Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) into reality, while also supporting efforts to work through backlogs of elective and diagnostic work as a result of the pandemic.

Health and care systems across the NHS need to develop people plans that align with system implementation plans for the next phase of the COVID-19 response. A significant challenge is people – expanding the number of professionals in key specialty areas and reforming the way the NHS educates and trains clinicians for a more flexible modern NHS. Our strategic Vision 2022 (V22), outlined in the box below, is a key part of that.

Vision 2022 (V22)

Our work in 2020/21 and into 2022 will continue to focus on meeting NHS challenges and supporting its transformation strategy.

To meet the changing needs of the NHS, we need to keep being innovative. With the pandemic, we have seen that new solutions can be found, and fast – for instance with the Nightingale Hospitals' new rapid recruitment process. Also critical to delivery is investment. That means investing in training and development, health and wellbeing and opportunity. It also requires building our capabilities, systems and processes.

Central to V22 is our ambitious outlook for the future of the NHS and NHSP, all focused on championing the flexible worker and prioritising patient care.

To achieve this we aim to:

- become the 'National Bank' of choice for flexible staffing and reduce the NHS dependence on external agency support
- build a membership and community model that supports and develops our 180,000-strong talent pool of flexible NHS workers
- develop new and value-adding services to NHS Trusts and NHS organisations, to truly differentiate the current service offer, becoming more agile and responsive in the market
- ensure NHSP is an 'employer of choice' for healthcare professionals in the workforce sector.

"NHSP had to be bold and brave in the design and delivery of critical resourcing services throughout the pandemic. Now we need to capitalise on this momentum and the foundations we've built so we can accelerate our ability to successfully meet NHS workforce challenges, now and in the future."

Mike Ruddle, Chief Commercial Officer, NHSP

Supporting Integrated Care Systems

The NHS is moving towards agile partnerships with a new design framework for ICS. This will support removing the divisions between health and social care providers to better meet the complex needs of people across a region. The new framework highlights the importance of 'one workforce', by aligning partners across each ICS and through closer collaboration across the health and care sector, local government, and voluntary and community sectors – for the benefit of a whole integrated care system.

While this will not be easy, and it may take time, it is this kind of environment where flexible workers can make all the difference, flexing to provide the right resource so that people across a local area can access the full range of NHS services consistently.

As the ICS space evolves, at NHSP we are committed to working in partnership with our NHS and ICS colleagues, and to exploring new and creative ways of collaborative working by designing and delivering innovative workforce solutions that support the integration agenda across the health and care system.

Retaining the 'NHS Curious'

We know that we need more new entrants into the workforce, including greater investment in apprenticeships and entry-level posts to enable people to train up for clinical and non-clinical roles.

Understanding the balance between demand and deployment is a key learning for the future. Alongside NHSEI, we are currently looking at how we repurpose the pandemic workforce, working to harness their transferrable skills.

During COVID-19, a lot of people stepped forward to be part of the workforce. This group – described by one client Trust as the 'NHS Curious' – come from other careers and industries, out of retirement or have moved from other clinical disciplines. This is a new type of workforce for the NHS, but we have already seen how highly valuable they are.

In collaboration with NHSEI, we have launched the NHS Staffing Pool, a national recruitment and retention programme. Its aim is to preserve and redeploy the pandemic workforce into alternative NHS career pathways (based on their preferences, skills, and experience) and match them to Bank and substantive demand within the NHS and wider healthcare system (including social care settings).

The programme also includes a pilot Staffing Pool programme with Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICS. This will focus on creating new pathways and roles that provide a bridge between the skills and behaviours of those stepping forward and the skills and behaviours required to perform specific roles and tasks needed by the NHS as it 'builds back better'.

Our role now within the NHS Staffing Pool pilot programme is to convert the 'NHS Curious' into a sustainable workforce. We want to place these people into roles with long-term careers in the health and care sectors, and in so doing make a valuable contribution towards the ambition set out in the NHS People Plan and NHS Long Term Plan of closing the workforce gap.

"Models such as ICS showcase the potential that putting flexibility at the heart of the NHS can achieve, especially when considering patient outcomes."

Helen Ives, Executive Director of Workforce, Hampshire & Isle of Wight ICS

Conclusion

“What a year it has been – so many challenges, but also many innovations. To see the fruits of everyone’s labour, skill and drive begin to really return dividends to the NHS is amazing, especially in difficult times like these. There is so much more to do as we constantly work to support our communities. It is a challenge I look forward to answering with my team as best we can in the year ahead.”

Nicola McQueen, Chief Executive Officer, NHSP

The pandemic legacy

This pandemic year has been unique for NHSP – as it has been for people everywhere. We have had to learn fast, adapt speedily and work more collaboratively with all our partners – internally and externally. Along with the DHSC and NHSEI, we remain on high alert, but in the meantime, there are many crisis lessons we can begin to integrate into our strategic priorities, informing how we move forward as a business.

We intend to harness the energy of change and innovation we have seen during the crisis and challenge any structures and behaviours that inhibit this model. We will work through legitimate concerns such as competency and compliance to spearhead a system transformation that allows flexible staff to hit the ground running at pace, wherever and whenever they work.

While we cannot predict the future, this past year has equipped us to better meet and react to the next challenges, whatever they may be, and maximise new opportunities with a long-term view.



Financials:

How did we do?

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Year ended 31 March 2021 £000	Year ended 31 March 2020 £000
Revenue	950,939	638,861
Cost of sales	(861,733)	(573,889)
Gross profit	89,206	64,972
Administrative expenses	(70,254)	(54,210)
Operating Profit	18,952	10,762
Finance income	21	369
Finance Cost	(108)	(99)
Loss on disposal of fixed assets	(10)	(13)
Profit before taxation	18,855	11,019
Tax expense	(3,560)	(2,126)
Profit for the year	15,295	8,893
Profit and total comprehensive income for the year	15,295	8,893

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	As at 31 March 2021 £000	As at 31 March 2020 £000
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	2,643	2,894
Right of use assets	3,761	4,523
Intangible assets	1,508	1,929
	7,912	9,346
Deferred tax	910	662
	8,822	10,008
Current assets		
Trade and other receivables	79,606	57,337
Other current assets	63,434	43,724
Cash and cash equivalents	111,425	87,352
	254,465	188,413
Total assets	263,287	198,421
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	(81,277)	(67,998)
Current tax liabilities	(1,822)	(1,023)
Lease liabilities	(898)	(839)
Other liabilities	(96,242)	(62,577)
Provisions	(1,375)	(1,399)
Total assets less current liabilities	81,673	64,585
Non-current liabilities		
Provisions	(2,742)	(311)
Other liabilities	(3,336)	(3,974)
Net Assets	75,595	60,300
Equity		
Ordinary shares	20,000	20,000
Share premium	3,369	3,369
Retained earnings	42,926	27,631
Capital reserve	9,300	9,300
Total equity	75,595	60,300

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Ordinary Shares £000	Share premium £000	Retained earnings £000	Capital reserve £000	Total Equity £000
Balance at 31 March 2019	20,000	3,369	28,738	9,300	61,407
Profit for the year and total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	8,893	-	8,893
Dividend payable	-	-	(10,000)	-	(10,000)
Balance at 31 March 2020	20,000	3,369	27,631	9,300	60,300
Profit for the year and total comprehensive income for the year	-	-	15,295	-	15,295
Balance at 31 March 2021	20,000	3,369	42,926	9,300	75,595

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Year ended 31 March 2021 £000	Year ended 31 March 2020 £000
Cash flows from operating activities		
Cash generated from operations	28,692	44,538
Tax paid	(3,009)	(1,501)
Net cash generated from operating activities	25,683	43,037
Cash flows from investing activities		
Payments for intangible assets	(160)	(1,084)
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(783)	(812)
Net cash used in investing activities	(943)	(1,896)
Net cash inflow before financing	24,740	41,141
Cash flows from financing activities		
Interest received on overdue receivables	21	369
Dividends Paid to Shareholders	-	(10,000)
Payment of lease liability	(580)	(345)
Payment of lease interest	(108)	(99)
Net cash outflow used in financing activities	(667)	(10,075)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	24,073	31,066
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	87,352	56,286
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	111,425	87,352

Meet our people

Our Executive Team



Nicola McQueen
Chief Executive Officer



Simon Hall
Chief Finance Officer



Anne Challinor
*Executive Director
Managed Client Services*

Our Non-Executive Team



Stephen Collier
Chairman



Adele Barker
Non-Executive Director



Oli Blackaby
Non-Executive Director



Dr Kate Langford
Non-Executive Director



John Flook
Non-Executive Director

NHS Professionals Limited

Annual report and financial statements for the 12 months ended 31 March 2021 have been prepared in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the European Union, IFRIC Interpretations and The Companies Act 2006 applicable to companies reporting under IFRS. An extract of these financial statements is included in this document. Full notes to these statements can be found in our Annual Report via Companies House website:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house

On 1 April 2010, the assets, liabilities and rights of NHS Professionals Special Health Authority transferred to NHS Professionals Limited, a public body and company guaranteed by shares held 100% by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The objective of the transfer was to implement the optimum trading form for NHS Professionals, its clients and its flexible staff, while giving the company greater financial independence in order to ensure the continuity of its services long term.

NHS Professionals Limited is now self-funding from operations and no longer receives financial support from the Department of Health and Social Care. It is funded through charges to clients within the NHS that cover the costs of acquiring flexible workers' services plus an amount to contribute to the operating costs of the organisation.