

Case Study

Workforce Planning at University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction

In 2023 University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (UHS) changed their rostering software, highlighting a discrepancy between demand and capacity within certain departments, particularly those with junior doctors.

The primary challenge facing UHS was the difference between the existing workforce planning models, based on analysis completed in 2019, and the evolving demands and requirements within medical and ward settings. This made it difficult to align service demands and assess capacity of junior doctors, affecting the service they were able to provide. Senior leaders within the Division of Medicine at UHS wanted to address these issues promptly and effectively.



Activity and approach

To address the need, Skills for Health proposed a rapid independent external workforce evaluation to deliver:

- A full review and evaluation of all available data (quantitative and qualitative) to identify gaps between the demand and capacity of junior doctors.
- A project plan with clear milestones, risks, and deliverables to enable quick mobilisation.
- A full evaluation report, with recommendations along with a detailed analysis to help shape and address UHS workforce planning challenges.

The first phase focused on gathering and utilising data and was achieved through collaboration with UHS during unprecedented strikes of both consultants and junior doctors. The project team conducted stakeholder interviews and analysed data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the workforce dynamics and requirements. Findings were then compiled into a detailed report for the consideration of senior leaders, including options and recommendations for optimising workforce deployment and capacity planning.



The impact

UHS have communicated that the report has already provided immense value and has formed the basis of many positive conversations.

UHS are now looking to develop Skills for Health's recommendations into a business case with costings, highlighting the importance of rotas and structure. Their goal is to be able to gain confidence that their junior doctor workforce adheres to national guidelines and best practice. They will also be able to ensure that deployment is optimal, balancing capacity to meet both current and anticipated service demands.

This project has created the insights and roadmap for UHS to deliver better patient outcomes, as well as good workforce retention, development, and recruitment.

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