Strategic Workforce Planning Guide

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Produced by: February 2023

Review: February 2024

Version 1.3

Contents

Introduction

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) is the process of analysing, forecasting and planning workforce supply and demand, assessing gaps and talent management interventions to ensure that an organization has the right people with the right skills in the right places at the right time.

Within this guide, we will outline six steps of SWP (In line with the Six Step Methodology to integrated workforce planning – for more information about this approach see the useful resources section) as well as introducing methodologies and resources to support teams/services when undertaking the process:

1. Define the plan
2. Map the service change
3. Define the required workforce
4. Understanding workforce availability
5. Develop an action plan
6. Implement, monitor and revise

It is important to note that varying levels of detail for each step is acceptable, depending on the circumstances of the planning exercise. Also, it is acceptable to use only some aspects of the steps above based on the circumstances, however we would recommend using all six when conducting a full SWP process.

After reading this guide, we would recommend using the included Workforce Planning Template to develop your own Workforce Plan. This approach to SWP can be undertaken at any level of your organisation and in partnership with ICS/B colleagues (for example NHS Providers, Primary Care, Social Care, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) colleagues)

Why do we workforce plan?

Our System is always changing with new approaches to work emerging (remote working, flexible working etc.), legislation changes, patient expectation changing, population needs changing, technological improvements and a range of other factors (for example cost of living, employment market). All these impact on our people and the delivery of services to both patients and colleagues, so it is important to plan our workforce to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Our SWP focuses on 3–5 year plans to allow us to make informed decisions regarding service delivery, talent management and recruitment. However, the principles outlined in this guide can be used for shorter (for example annual planning) or longer time periods.

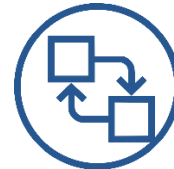*Challenges that workforce planning can assist with:*

Budget / Establishment Changes

Highlighting Skill Gaps

Service Transformation or Realignment

Change in strategic objectives

Production of Talent Management / Development Plans

Completing National / Regional / System Submissions

Define the plan

Executive Summary

This section is designed to offer a high level overview of the information within the rest of the seven sections and provides a business rationale for the development of the SWP.

Involving your stakeholders

Ensuring that stakeholders are involved and/or informed is vital for the success of the development and implementation of a SWP.

The first step within this process is to define your stakeholders (both internal and external). There is an example list below of typical stakeholders, however it's important to review the list of stakeholders for each SWP as they may vary.
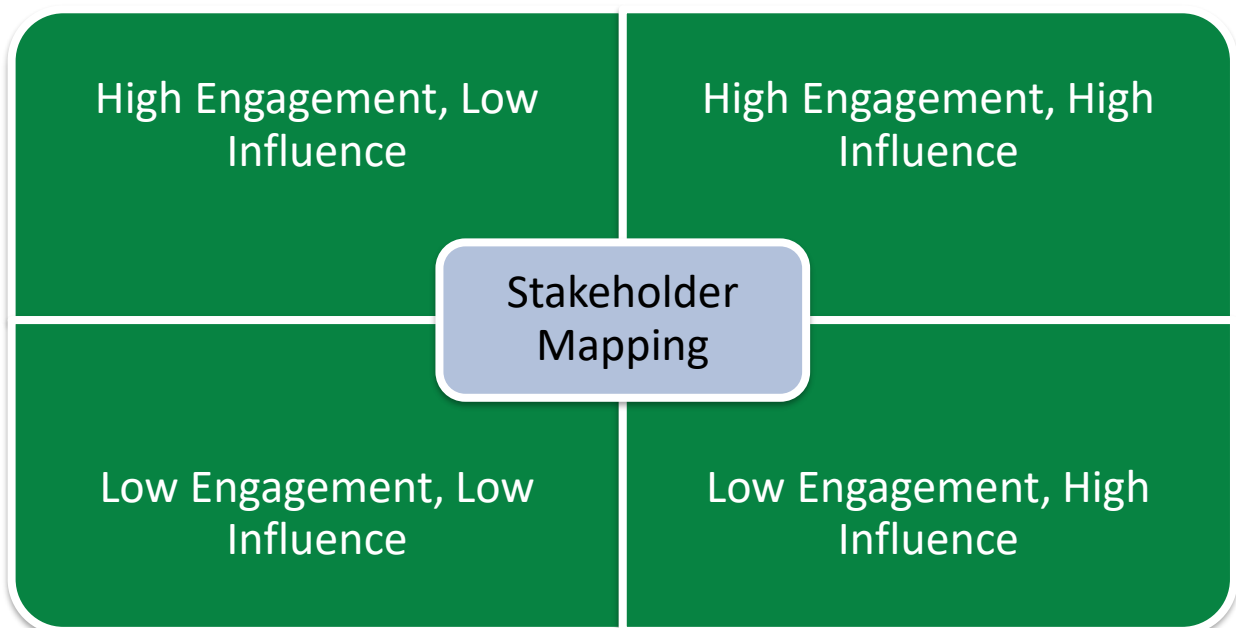
Example list of stakeholders:

- Patients
- Patient's relatives
- Colleagues within your organisation
- NHS Provider Colleagues
- Board / Executive Team
- Senior Management Team

- ICS/B Partners
- Primary Care Colleagues
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) colleagues
- Union Representatives
- Relevant Boards and Committees
- Corporate Colleagues (for example Human Resources, Finance, Learning and Development, Organisational Development)

Involving your stakeholders in all aspects of the Workforce Planning Process is essential to successful integration and the adoption of actions within the workforce plan. It is important to understand the impact that each stakeholder may have on the workforce planning process, so we would recommend completing the Stakeholder Engagement-Influence Grid (see useful resources for a template).

Included below is a breakdown of each of the different sections of the grid:

High Engagement, Low Influence	High Engagement, High Influence
Stakeholder Mapping	
Low Engagement, Low Influence	Low Engagement, High Influence

Low engagement, low influence

These stakeholders do not have much impact or focus on your workforce planning actions; however, it is recommended to keep in contact with them in case their circumstances change.

High engagement, low influence

These stakeholders require management as their high engagement can potentially negatively affect the implementation of actions via resistance if not managed correctly. These stakeholders can be difficult to manage but understanding and being transparent

regarding actions can assist the adoption of new approaches.

Low engagement, high influence

Normally people with a low interest are disinterested stakeholders. It is important to keep them updated and well-informed via frequent meetings. If these colleagues are not informed and/or managed well they may be persuaded to resist actions and generate difficulties for the implementation of plans.

High engagement, high influence

These stakeholders are both significantly impacted by change and most able to influence it. It is critical to engage with these stakeholders and ensure that they have an understanding as well as ensuring their 'buy in' for actions. This can be achieved by providing these stakeholders with a sense of ownership regarding the actions where possible.

Map the service change

Strategic Drivers

Prior to defining the workforce demands and requirements, it is vital to consider the drivers for change within your team, service, directorate, your organisation or ICS/B.

This involves understanding the key goals and objectives defined by leadership at each level of the organisation as well as how this will impact on the workforce requirements.

This information can normally be found in organisational/system strategies, business plans or by speaking to your senior management.

There are questions to enable an understanding of the strategic drivers within the workforce planning template included in this guide, alongside additional questions to consider below:

- Are you expecting any significant organisational changes over the next 1-3 years? Also, what could potentially drive these changes?
- What short/long term plans or strategies are in place currently?
- What are the current workforce challenges that you are experiencing that could impact on the plans outlined above?
- What are the current challenges outside of your organisation that could impact on you? *(Please refer to the PESTLE analysis (Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological, Legal, Environmental) included in this guide to assist you with answering this question.)*

Define the required workforce

Demand Analysis

Within this step of the SWP approach, you should strive to understand the expectation of your population or colleagues (including quantity, care pathways, necessary skills) historically, currently and in the future. Using this information, you can forecast the workforce required to perform the necessary job functions whilst taking into consideration existing caseloads/workloads and future drivers of change.

There are number of datasets that we would recommend reviewing at this step to ensure that predictions around the future workforce are defined by existing metrics.

We have provided examples below of common metrics for this stage, but it is important to tailor the metrics to best reflect the demands of your service/team:

- Number of referrals (Clinical Teams)
- Number of patients seen (Clinical Teams)
- Number of Beds (Clinical Teams)
- Number of completed tasks
- List of key tasks
- Amount of time spent on performing tasks
- Geographical Area covered
- Population Health Data (Clinical Teams)

As outlined above, we focus significantly on tasks undertaken by colleagues in this step so would strongly recommend that a task analysis, especially on key tasks (a template is provided within the workforce planning template) is conducted during this step to ensure a clear understanding of the current tasks and where, if possible, these maybe enhanced/modified in the future in line with service change.

Understand workforce availability

Supply Analysis

Within this step of the SWP approach, it is critical to outline the current and future requirements for the workforce to ensure that the service can operate safely and effectively. This analysis needs to factor in turnover and other trends (sickness, planned vacancies etc.). As well as the number of colleagues, it is vital to consider the skills mix of the workforce to ensure that it matches the needs of the service (for more information about skill mix and workforce structure – please refer to the 7Rs document within the useful resources section).

Alongside the Supply Analysis, we would recommend completing a Critical Role Analysis to ensure an understanding of key individuals/roles and how these impact on

the delivery of your service. A template for a Critical Role Analysis has been provided within the Useful Resources Section.

To conduct Supply Analysis, it is essential to collect a variety of datasets to support your forecasts regarding the future workforce.

These datasets may include but not limited to:

- Headcount
- Pay Bands / Salaries
- Sickness Rates
- Starters / Leavers (Staff Turnover)
- Retirement eligibility
- Current Vacancies
- Workforce Diversity Profile (Age, Gender, Race, Disability etc.)
- Years of Service
- Location
- Role Breakdown
- Reasons for Leaving – Termination
- Activity Metrics
- Patient Experience
- Benchmarking
- Staff Rotas and Job Plans
- Organisational Structure Charts
- Establishment (Budget)
- Bank and Agency Spend (if appropriate)
- Overtime
- Staff Experience (Collected via staff feedback / surveys)
- Recruitment History
- Current Recruitment advertisements
- Process Maps – Tasks within the organisation
- Service Offer / Specification and Contract Expectations
- Educational Workforce Pipeline

Develop an action plan

Gap Analysis

Following the completion of workforce demand and supply analysis, a gap analysis can be undertaken to assess the gaps between these two analysis outcomes. This type of analysis can be used for headcount, skills, types of roles and a range of other metrics depending on the data collected in the previous two steps. We have included in the workforce planning template an example of a gap analysis layout; however, this can be customised based on the gaps under review.

During the Gap Analysis process, it is important to remember the following questions:

- What gaps impact on the strategic objectives of the organisation, directorate or team?
- Are there gaps that could be easily addressed?
- Which gaps would you prioritise first?

Solution Formulation and Implementation

During this phase of the workforce plan, the development of an action plan to address and implement appropriate workforce interventions to reduce the gaps. The timescale of an action plan can vary based on several factors. It is vitally important to ensure that each action within the solution formulation phase has milestones that can be regularly reviewed. This will be discussed further in the next section.

There are a range of potential workforce interventions that can be used to close gaps in headcount, skills, types of roles and other metrics, however some common strategies are listed below. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and should only be used as a guide. We would encourage anyone completing an action plan to liaise with their stakeholders, as in previous steps, especially around any actions that will impact or require the influence of others and to contribute where appropriate.

Potential Workforce Interventions:

- Integration of new roles and skill mix solutions to mitigate staffing challenges for traditional roles
- Adopting apprenticeships and other available workforce when appropriate for difficult to recruit roles (for example reservists, students)
- Utilising Bank colleagues to relieve workload on substantive staff (if appropriate)
- Improvements to administrative procedures
- Re-structuring of functions (centralising or de-centralising)
- Undertaking of additional Education and Development to enhance or modify the skill mix and talent
- Utilisation of emerging technology
- Utilisation of alternative recruitment approaches (recruitment events, countywide advertisements)
- Refinement or changing existing tasks to match skill mix or emerging health concerns

After the workforce interventions have been defined, allocated a responsible individual/team and assigned milestones (if appropriate), it is essential to set a form of criteria to assess the progress and impact of the intervention. These criteria will be vital in the next step of the SWP.

Implement, monitor and revise

Monitoring and Evaluation

Following the development of the action plan, it is essential that all of the interventions are periodically reviewed to assess their effectiveness, any unforeseen impacts and whether they are still relevant in the ever-changing landscape of the workforce. This process is assisted by the utilisation of milestones during the previous steps especially when an intervention has multiple steps/processes/individuals involved.

The frequency of the reviews for intervention will vary based on the nature of the action itself, however we would recommend that interventions are reviewed at least once every three months. It is also important to note that once an intervention is no longer relevant or appropriate, it should be removed or amended. We recommend that this is considered at each review.

There are several approaches that can be used to review the progress of interventions and we have listed a range below as guidance:

- Staff Experience Metrics
- Patient Experience Metrics
- Meetings and discussions with involved stakeholders
- Review of any changes in Workforce metrics (for example headcount analysis)
- Surveys and Focus Groups
- Process Reviews

Useful Resources

Resources

Skills for Health – Six Steps Methodology
Six Steps methodology to Integrated Workforce Planning - Skills for Health

Strategic Health Asset Planning and Evaluation (Shape)
SHAPE | Strategic Health Asset Planning and Evaluation (shapeatlas.net)

HEE eProduct Portal – Source of Workforce and Education reporting products
Sign up for our new eProduct portal | Health Education England (hee.nhs.uk)

HEE Star Tool
HEE Star: Accelerating workforce redesign | Health Education England

Useful Documents / Templates

7 Rights Template
7 Rights Template - Workforce Planning Intranet

PESTLE Assessment Template

[PESTLE Assessment Template - Workforce Planning Intranet](#)

Critical Role Analysis Template

[Critical Role Analysis Template - Workforce Planning Intranet](#)

SWOT Assessment Template

[SWOT Assessment Template - Workforce Planning Intranet](#)

Influence-Interest Matrix

[Influence - Interest Grid - Workforce Planning Intranet](#)