

People Analytics: A priority for NHS workforce leadership



Liaison
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Foreword, from Nicky Ingham, Executive Director, HPMA

I am pleased to provide the introduction to this People Analytics research. HPMA are here to improve health through people and never has it been so important to really understand our people, our data and what it is telling you. People Analytics cannot be examined in isolation of other key performance information, as they are all interlinked and together may tell us a different narrative. Over the years, there has been significant underinvestment in workforce systems to support the People Analytics agenda, with many organisations having to procure other systems to get the information they need in a format that they can utilise. This research draws out the views of our people professionals across the UK, building on the priorities outlined in our nationwide people strategies and plans.

Workforce data tells you a story on a page, however, you need to analyse it to really understand that story and what the data is telling you. Looking at data in isolation, and historic data, does not provide a 'real time picture' of what is really going on in your organisation. Workforce systems and data need to be intuitive and available immediately to really support key decision making, planning, and safe service provision. The NHS workforce has worked tirelessly during unprecedented times, being moved at a moment's notice to provide care and support where

it has been most needed, which is fine in the short-term, however, can result in dissatisfaction and burn out, and in some circumstances, deskilling. Having people information at your fingertips supports more informative planning and supporting the realisation of your workforce's potential.

The pandemic has been a huge catalyst for change, enabling our people profession to take their rightful place at centre stage. It is essential that we build on this and play our vital role in shaping our workforce for the future, transforming cultures that centre

around our people, and our patients and service users.

This research really demonstrates the need for investment in robust and real-time workforce information systems, for alignment with other key performance information, and strengthens the need for good People Analytics to support key decision making to enhance the work of our healthcare systems. It builds on the need for improved workforce planning and workforce utilisation, and the seriousness by which People Analytics can support the key strategic direction of organisations.

Executive summary

In November 2021, the Chief People Officer for NHS England, Prerana Issar, published a report on *'The future of NHS human resources and organisational development'*. At the same time, HPMA and Liaison Workforce conducted a survey of HPMA members to establish where NHS organisations currently stand in regards to the use of People Analytics, and the barriers and drivers to implementing a People Analytics platform for this.

The research found that People Analytics is a priority for 97% of the organisations who completed the survey; the main drivers to implementing People Analytics being increased organisational agility and a wish to encourage a data-driven culture for better workforce planning and people-based decision making.

Here, a link between the themes of the Chief People Officer's report and the survey outcomes became apparent – a number of the actions highlighted as requirements for the workforce vision to 2030 are reflected in the barriers for People Analytics, and in overcoming these, it can be seen that progress can be made through the successful implementation of People Analytics at organisational and system level to benefit the NHS workforce.

This research paper recommends three stages of preparation ahead of People Analytics implementation, to ensure a smoother transition to use, and help overcome any perceived barriers to such use.

As analytics programmes are routinely used in other business areas across healthcare, the benefits in taking these steps to ensure that workforce leaders have the tools and data at hand to lead their staff through the challenges which continue to be faced, is essential.

People Analytics and the future of the NHS workforce

People Analytics allows business problems to be solved through the analytical use of HR or people data. It provides people professionals and their stakeholders with workforce insights and can help to improve evidence-based decision making to increase efficiency and improve workforce management.

Towards the end of 2021, the NHS Chief People Officer published a new report; *'The future of NHS human resources and organisational development'*. In recognition of the changing nature of working within the NHS, Prerana Issar's report details eight themes on the future of NHS human resources and organisational development vision for 2030.

A number of these themes directly align with the capabilities and benefits provided by the effective use of People Analytics, presenting the opportunity for organisations and systems to move swiftly towards achieving long-term goals.

Workforce planning



> Real-time data

The NHS needs a cross-organisational view of talent, and a centralised capability database to enable people to move between organisations and systems. This will help the people profession plan and deploy the workforce, to meet patient needs.

> Systems-level planning

Incomplete data and a lack of interoperability – coupled with a lack of alignment between local, system and national workforce planning – make it difficult to plan services across different parts of the health and care infrastructure.

> Alignment

Nationally, there is a disconnect between long-term workforce supply predictions, education and commissioning, and the workforce numbers needed to meet health and care demand.

People Analytics and the future of the NHS workforce (Continued)



Technology and data

> Data systems

Out-of-date systems make it difficult to gain a snapshot of core people data across the NHS, impeding cross-organisational working.

> Interoperability

Limited interoperability between systems makes it difficult to analyse people data to measure and improve performance, and increases the amount of manual work involved in reporting on key metrics.

> Self-service

Frequent challenges with managing self-service and people analytics through core HR information systems create a poor user experience and prevent systems being used to their full potential.

> Digital capability

Levels of digital capability across the workforce result in missed opportunities to optimise the experience of the NHS (as an employer and provider of health services) and to improve our responsiveness and efficiency.

> Integration

Better integrated systems analytics would save time and money and further support the people profession to deliver better services to patients and service users.

> Integrated care systems silos

Primary and social care are often siloed within systems and excluded from key initiatives. Often, systems cannot access a view of the entire workforce. The provision of people services to primary and social care is variable and, in many cases, does not exist at all. This hampers work across the profession, including efforts to create workforce plans and talent pipelines.

People Analytics and your organisation

Prior to the release of the NHS Chief People Officer's report, HPMA and Liaison Workforce conducted a survey of HPMA members to find out if, how and why people analytics are currently being used within NHS organisations, as well as the barriers to their use.

Key findings



The majority of NHS organisations state that People Analytics is a priority over the next 3 years.

97%

of organisations that responded stated **People Analytics** was a **priority**.

77%

stating it as a **high priority**.

12.5%

of organisations are **not using any People Analytics** solutions today.

Less than 1/2

of organisations have **appointed an executive sponsor** for **People Analytics**.



Skills and Knowledge is still a major barrier to using and adopting People Analytics.

66%

stated that **skills and knowledge** was a **barrier within the HR function**.

Less than 1/3

of organisations felt that managers have **the right skills** to become **digital and data savvy**.

New data roles are being introduced within the **HR function**.

1 in 4

organisations are **creating Data Leader** roles.

3 in 4


organisations are **looking to introduce** additional data analytic roles.

People Analytics and your organisation (Continued)

Key findings continued


 The quality of workforce data continues to be a major barrier within organisations.

1 in 3
organisations state **data quality as a barrier.**

 Improving organisational culture and increased agility are major drivers for the use of People Analytics.

44%
of organisations wish to **create a data driven culture.**

34%
of organisations wish to **improve organisational agility.**

 Business intelligence solutions are widely used across most organisations but are somewhat limited with the HR function.

70%
of organisations use **external business intelligence solutions.**

20%
report that **finance teams are the main user.**

6%
of organisations state that **HR are utilising the business intelligence solutions** available.

With 97% of organisations stating that People Analytics is a priority over the next 3 years, where do we start?

Three steps which should be taken to help your organisation prepare to use People Analytics

1 What is our organisation's HR strategy regarding people data?

When considering data collection, the content presented to users' needs to be relevant. Information overload is often a factor that disengages users early on, and so HR leaders need to be clear on what areas of analysis have the most value and impact so that users can find meaning in the data quickly.

2 Do we understand the value and purpose of our People Analytics?

To bring people along on the analytics journey, you need to be able to articulate what value it will bring the organisation and how it will benefit different stakeholders. An organisation should consider what the non-monetary benefits are, and what it hopes to achieve from the analytics.

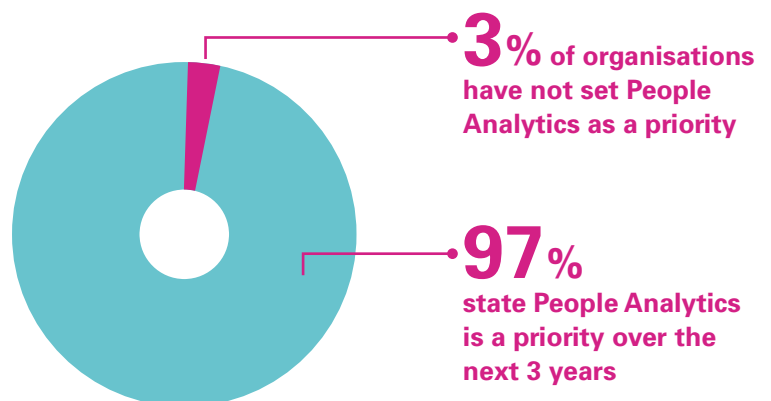
3 Do we understand the analytics data quality challenges?

The graveyard for reporting software products is vast and well walked, often because they are rolled out to the user base and the users don't trust the data or know how to effectively utilise it. It is rare to get two chances to engage a user base, so it is extremely important to ensure that the data presented is of a high quality from the outset.

Considering these questions and how they will be actioned ahead of implementation has been shown to lead to a **smoother transition** to using People Analytics long term and to **greater benefit** for the stakeholders involved.

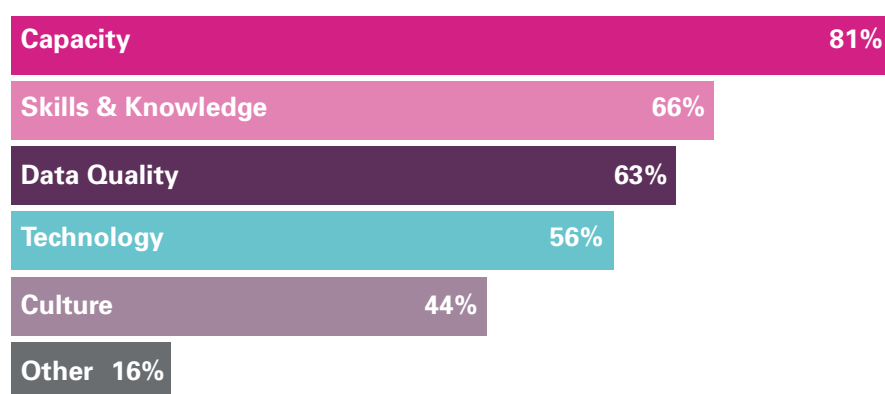
In our research, when asked if People Analytics was a priority over the next three years, **97% of respondents said it was**, with **77% of those saying it was a high priority** for their organisations.

12.5% of these organisations are **not using People Analytics** currently.



The barriers to using and adopting People Analytics

The challenges to using People Analytics identified by our research



81%
Capacity

66%
Skills and
Knowledge

63%
Data quality

In order to overcome these barriers in NHS organisations, a set methodology approach is often the most effective path to take. This takes the process of implementation from initial discovery to alignment with best practice and organisation culture. Once this is completed, the actual implementation of People Analytics takes place, with any potential issues or barriers ironed out in advance.

Through this focused approach, any cultural and technological barriers to collecting and analysing people data can be overcome, and a single view of useful and usable data can be provided, allowing for better decision making, and benefitting the organisation, workforce and patients.

The barriers to using and adopting People Analytics (Continued)

A focused approach to overcoming the People Analytics barriers

There are five key areas of focus which will support the successful implementation and use of People Analytics within an organisation.

1**Culture**

Understanding organisational culture helps to ensure the correct data sources are used, guaranteeing success and reducing 'users' anxiety' around the change of using a new system.

2**Collaboration**

Ensuring collaboration across functions is essential to ensure that needs are met for a fully usable and effective People Analytics programme.

3**System thinking and delivery**

A clear user-centric approach is central to ensuring effective use by those who may not have advanced analytical skills, or who have limited capacity.

4**Enhanced agility**

To ensure effective data and information flow, it is essential to look at users' needs and tailor the People Analytics solution, reducing unnecessary noise from an overload of data.

5**Optimising information**

A focus on showing how information can lead to effective data-driven decisions helps to embed the solution and demonstrate its use and benefits.

The barriers to using and adopting People Analytics (Continued)

Overcoming data quality issues

Our research stated that for two out of three organisations, workforce data quality issues are a major challenge to the use and adoption of People Analytics.

Three questions to help to improve data quality, which in turn promotes data trust and overall usage of the People Analytics solution.

1

Should you stagger your data rollout?

Not all of your workforce data needs to go live on day one of using a People Analytics platform. Load the data that you know is correct and create a plan to address the remaining data after this time.

Also, consider who will use the platform based on the data you initially have in the system to ensure that it is immediately relevant to the user, which will further encourage ongoing use.

2

Who has data ownership?

You may need to change your organisation's relationship with data, and be clear on who your data owners are in the organisation. Many people think that the reporting and HR teams are the workforce data owners but this often isn't true; these teams merely consume and interpret the data available. Within the NHS, data ownership should sit with the Service Managers and Divisional Leads, who need to lead and drive forward the timely inputting of data through policy adherence, process reviews and system usage to ensure overall effective reporting.

3

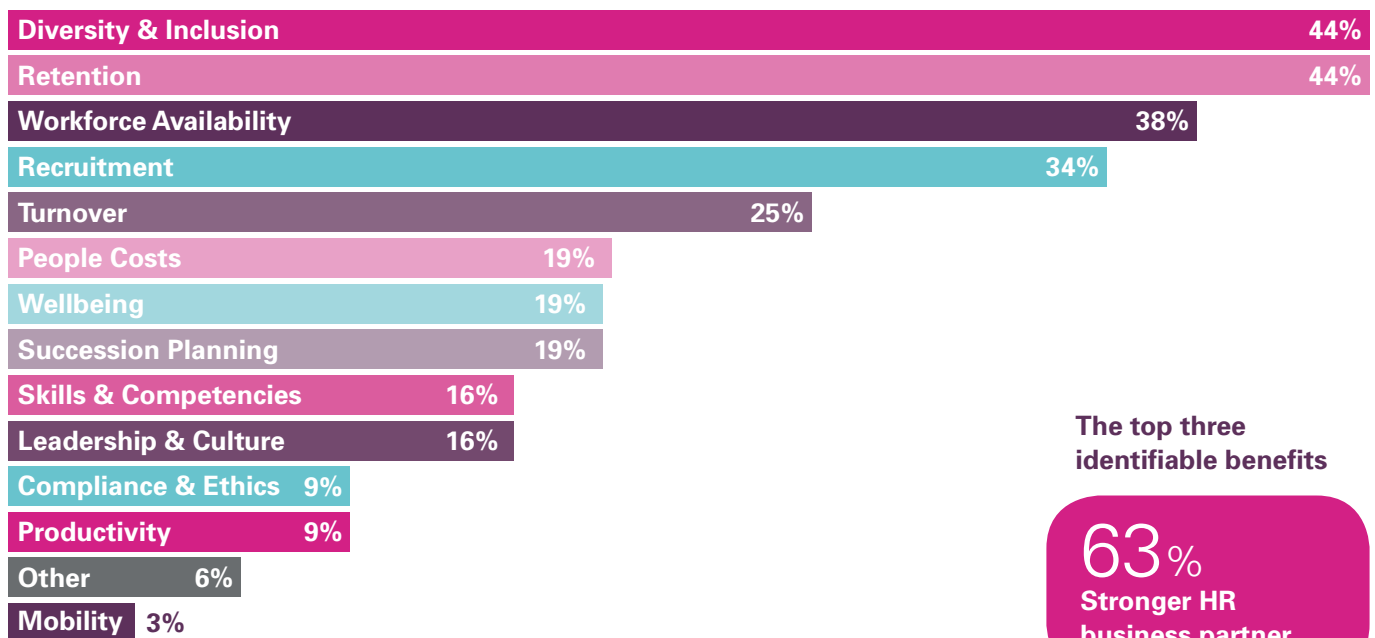
Do you need a data amnesty?

Once you have identified what data is needed, where it is not correct, you could consider creating a 'data amnesty', giving the data owners an opportunity to understand why the data needs correcting, what the benefits are, and a period of time (and support if necessary) to correct the data with no repercussions or blame for past data inaccuracies. This will allow for data quality to be improved, with the support of those who may be concerned about its potential trustworthiness.

The major drivers to using and adopting People Analytics

As shown in our research, the two main aims for organisations using People Analytics are creating a data driven culture (44%) and improving organisational agility (34%).

The main drivers for using People Analytics



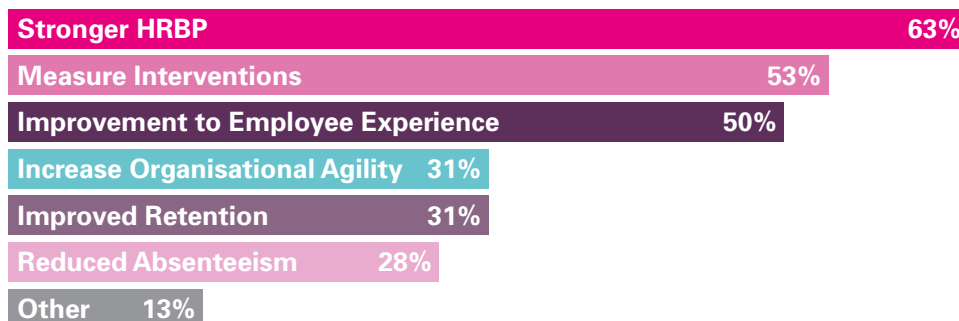
The top three identifiable benefits

63%
Stronger HR
business partner

53%
Measuring
interventions

50%
Improving the
employee experience

The benefits of using People Analytics



The major drivers to using and adopting People Analytics (Continued)

What other benefits can an organisation expect to see in the months following a People Analytics launch?

Linking back to the actions from the Chief People Officer's report which we previously identified as being achievable through the use of People Analytics, the solution can have significant benefits for the workforce, organisations and systems, including:

Workforce planning

- ✓ Providing centralised data to allow people to move between organisations and systems, and helping to support planning and deployment to meet patient needs.
- ✓ Promoting system-level workforce planning, including supporting interoperability for better system working.
- ✓ Aligning workforce supply with patient demand.
- ✓ Providing future forecasting functionality, benefitting recruitment and retention.
- ✓ Ability to identify and share trends and decisions with clinical management.

Technology and data

- ✓ Bringing data systems up to date, and enabling interoperability between systems.
- ✓ Reducing manual reporting time.
- ✓ Increasing digital capability both as an organisation, and in creating a positive user experience to obtain up to date and relevant HR data.
- ✓ Allowing systems to gain a view of the entire workforce, and giving the provision of people data services to primary and social care.

Conclusion

Business intelligence solutions are widely used within NHS organisations at present, but these often take the form of spreadsheets or systems primarily built for other functions, such as finance. If an organisation is to truly consider the long-term needs of its workforce and commit to the actions detailed in the Chief People Officer's report, a business intelligence system built with the workforce in mind is essential.

Where 97% of organisations consider People Analytics to be a priority for the next three years, it can be seen that people professionals and workforce managers want to increase their use of effective data and analysis for better workforce planning and management, but may need assistance in taking the steps to overcome any barriers faced.

97%

of organisations consider
People Analytics to be
a **priority for the next
three years.**

Methodology

In conducting the survey for this research paper, Liaison Workforce devised a series of questions probing the current use of People Analytics across NHS organisations, and its barriers and drivers.

This was sent to the members of the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA), who are based throughout the UK. The following findings are based on the 31 responses received in late 2021.

**Get in touch to
find out more about:**

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**Liaison Workforce's
mii People Analytics platform**

info@liaisongroup.com

**The process, outcomes and benefits
of implementing mii People Analytics
at NHS Stockport Foundation Trust**

<https://liaisongroup.com/liaison-workforce/people-analytics/>



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