Classification: Official

NHS

Interim Management and Support

Annual Report 2024/25

Publication reference: DRAFT v0.3

Contents

Introduction

The purpose of this annual report is to highlight the work completed by NHS Interim Management and Support (NHS IMAS) for the financial year 2024/25.

This report demonstrates NHS IMAS' impact on strategic alignment with the Long-Term Plan and emerging priorities, detailing achievement of business objectives and contribution to cost efficiencies, through system wide deployment of interim resources. This emphasises NHS IMAS' value as a cost-efficient and strategic alternative to external recruitment agencies.

NHS IMAS is centred around three key areas that utilise NHS IMAS and its systems and processes to deliver for the NHS in England:

- NHS IMAS Core offer – providing senior short to medium-term interim management and support to resource the NHS, including NHS England (NHSE), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).
- Talent Management – working with NHSE both Nationally and Regionally, to develop talent within the NHS.
- Flexible Resourcing for NHSE – working with NHSE Human Resources and Organisation Development (HR&OD) Team on the flexible resourcing operating model for NHSE to ensure that the right people, with the right skills, are in the right place at the right time to meet the short and medium-term resource needs of the organisation.

Funding, Hosting, and Governance

NHS IMAS is funded and hosted by NHSE's Workforce, Training and Education Directorate.

The Senior Sponsor for NHS IMAS is NHS England's Chief Workforce, Training and Education Officer. NHS IMAS is governed by a Strategic Advisory Board that represents the broad spectrum of NHS client organisations.

NHS IMAS comprises:

- A small core team which concentrates on building the talent pool, assignment selection, evaluation, and project management.
- Over 1000 pool members including Partners, NHS staff and carefully selected independent consultants.

- Specialist pools of individuals to support a number of talent and transformation programmes across the NHS (including peer to peer mentoring).

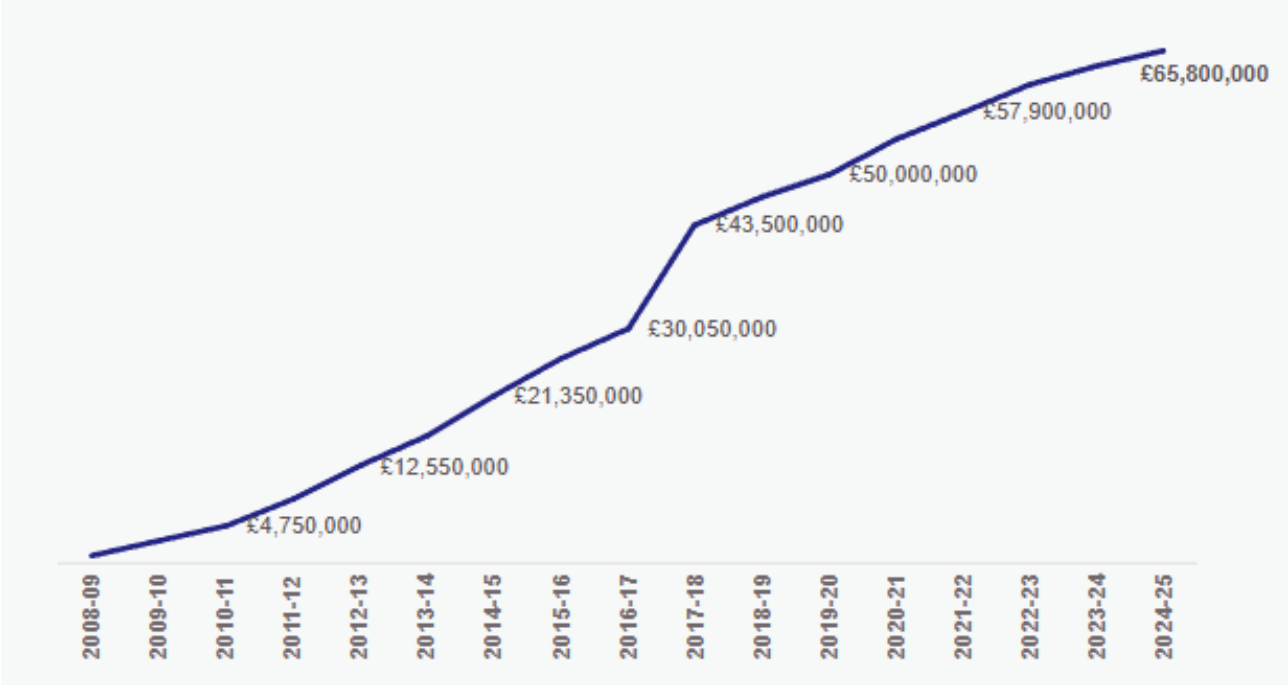
Achievements

During 2024/25 NHS IMAS achieved the following against the three key priorities from the Business Plan:

NHS IMAS Core Business

NHS IMAS has been operating successfully since 2008. Since its inception, NHS IMAS has completed over 1,600 assignments, and a gross turnover in excess of £112.8 million, producing overall savings for the NHS estimated at £65.8 million with an average saving of £3.5 million over the last five years.

The commitment to support the NHS, to embed sustainable change and save money, has been, and continues to be, at the forefront of everything that NHS IMAS delivers. In 2024/25 alone, the estimated saving to the NHS was in excess of £2.1 million benchmarked against private sector alternatives.



Graph above indicates NHS IMAS estimated savings to the NHS since inception.

The high rate of savings to the NHS can be attributed to the team maintaining an average of 132 NHS IMAS assignments managed at any one time, finishing the year with 134 live assignments meeting the business plan target of managing between 120 – 140 live assignments at any one given time.

Feedback from clients continued to be positive in 2024/25, with 100% of clients stating that they would use NHS IMAS again and 100% stating that in their experience, NHS IMAS was good value compared to independent consultancies. Further comments received from clients during feedback calls included:

"[the pool member] was exactly what was needed at the time. They brought a systematic approach to the finance function to support the partnership working arrangements with external organisations.' ***- Chief Executive, ALB***

'[the pool member] did very well and I was pleased with the work they did. They were calm, methodical and brought stability with their experience [...] other than "keeping the show on the road", they did some good, positive work with the SLT to tackle behaviours.' - ***Chief Executive, Provider organisation***

'The pool member was extremely flexible in challenging circumstances and was a valuable addition [...] they exceeded expectations.' ***- Chief of Staff, Provider organisation.***

NHS IMAS has also collaborated with 134 organisations in 2024/25, surpassing its goal of achieving a 10% growth compared to the 2023/24 period. NHS IMAS engaged with a broad spectrum of NHS organisations including NHS England both nationally and regionally, Integrated Care Systems (ICS), and Provider Trusts (Acute, Ambulance, Mental Health and Community). Providing access to experienced NHS managers to support the NHS' strategic priorities including the Long-Term Plan and the Operational Planning Guidance. NHS IMAS successfully piloted the service offer to another UK nation, with the aim of rolling this out further to generate income for the service.

Alongside the large number of assignments NHS IMAS supported during 2024/25, the team were successfully able to exceed the business plan target increasing the NHS pool by 13% in 2024/25. High quality candidates continued to join both the NHS and Independent pools throughout the year, enabling NHS IMAS to continue to source high calibre individuals to fulfil assignment requests. NHS IMAS finished the 2024/25 year with a total of over 1000 pool members, which includes individuals registered for talent management programmes.

NHS IMAS is committed to developing NHS staff joining the pool with a variety of learning and development activities such as the Consultancy and Facilitation Skills blended learning course. Cohort nine was completed between June and October 2024 with new course content and a revised course schedule. Despite the new content, the core purpose of the course will remain the same, to help prepare NHS staff to undertake assignments in other organisations by

providing them with the tools and techniques when operating in an interim role and undertaking a consultancy assignment.

Feedback from the previous eight cohorts has been overwhelmingly positive with 100% of participants indicating that they learnt new skills and techniques that they would go on to use and share within their current roles and organisations as well as using them during NHS IMAS assignments. Several suggestions were made to improve the modules and workshops, which have been adopted in the planning round for cohort 10.

NHS IMAS also hosted six webinar training sessions, with over 189 pool members benefitting from these sessions on the day, with a further 101 watching the sessions once published online, exceeding our business plan target. All sessions received positive feedback. These sessions were delivered in conjunction with NHS IMAS Partners and senior experienced NHS leaders, who were able to share good practice and learning gathered from within their own organisations.

The webinars covered a variety of topics such as:

- ‘Mental Health Policy – My asylum days’, delivered by an experienced retired Chief Executive
- Psychological Safety as a foundation for improvement’, delivered by a senior NHS improvement specialist.
- ‘The Head Gardener’, an insightful webinar produced and delivered by a former Director of Workforce, and Executive Coach
- ‘Suicide rates among Nurses’, a powerful webinar delivered by a senior Nursing Director
- A topical webinar focussing on ‘International income generation’, led by a Healthcare Export Specialist for a government department
- A detailed webinar looking at ‘Benefits realisation’ in healthcare, led by a financial consultant director

Long Term Plan and Long Term Workforce Plan

Throughout 2024/25, NHS IMAS carried out assignments across all types of NHS organisations throughout England, to support the objectives found in the Long Term Plan and Long Term Workforce Plan. For example, NHS IMAS worked with an NHS Acute Trust to provide support for their elective care recovery and restoration, by resourcing an Interim Chief Executive to provide strategic leadership and direction setting. Resulting in improved elective

access performance including exceeding target reduction for patients waiting over 65 weeks and increased theatre utilisation.

NHS IMAS helped an NHS system improve financial sustainability and the delivery of improvement programmes by resourcing an Interim Finance Director to provide strategic leadership for all aspects of the finance function, including the ongoing improvement of its financial forecasting, controls and modelling capacity; and providing a System Recovery PMO Director to provide expertise in establishing structures and driving initiatives in the intensive recovery work for an ICB to enable sustainable financial efficiencies

The team also provided support to improving maternity and neonatal services, by resourcing a Director of Midwifery at a Teaching Hospital NHS Trust to lead on governance, ensuring best practice processes are embedded resulting in safe and effective care.

NHS IMAS worked with an Ambulance Service with the aim of improving Ambulance response times, by providing senior management expertise to lead on the delivery of an Integrated Urgent Care plan, ensuring patients get the care they need across the urgent care community.

Furthermore, there was work done around improving leadership culture by resourcing an Implementation Advisor at an ALB, to provide subject matter expertise and to support the implementation of Kark recommendations, and resourced executive coaching and mentoring support to those leading complex change in the wider system.

Finally, the team supported the Long Term plan aim of moving care from hospital to community by resourcing an Improvement Director at an ICB with the aim to develop a mental health virtual ward supporting patients to keep well at home, reducing the need for acute hospital admissions and providing enhanced early supported discharge; and, by providing a Clinical Lead at an Acute NHS Trust to improve the interface between acute and community pathways for adult therapies, with recommendations for a future operating model.

Executive Coaching and Mentoring

NHS IMAS has continued to coordinate the Chair and Chief Executive mentoring scheme, which is aimed at providing new in post Chair and Chief Executives with peer-to-peer support.

There was a continuation of the close working relationship with the Proud2bOps network to deliver the Proud2bOps mentoring programme. The programme is aimed at providing support for Operational staff across the system, to allow them to obtain a mentor to share learning, and develop best practices, with the aim of leading to improved service delivery.

As part of NHS IMAS' commitment to support the development of quality leadership, the team have also worked with NHS England to deliver and resource executive coaching and mentoring across Trusts, Integrated Care Boards and National organisations.

For example, through NHS IMAS a provider organisation has been able to secure an executive mentor for their newly-appointed Chair on a mid-term agreement to support them as they transition into the role.

Similarly, NHS IMAS has been successful in developing a pool of 78 Proud2bOps mentors and establishing 25 mentoring relationships for operational staff across England. The team will continue to develop the scheme over the 2025/26 financial year, with an aim of increasing the number of live mentors, and mentoring relationships.

Regional account model, and Talent Management

In April 2024, NHS IMAS implemented a regional account model. This model aligns NHS IMAS Resourcing Managers to an allocated Region. The primary objective of this is to ensure NHS IMAS delivers its offer in line with the new NHSE Operating Framework and developing close working relationships with regional colleagues. Through this regional model, the NHS IMAS team continued to work in a targeted approach with NHSE colleagues to deliver the best possible support to retain talent in the NHS and develop future healthcare leaders.

Through this approach, NHS IMAS continued to offer talent pool members access to a variety of interim opportunities across all NHS organisations and specialities. The offer also supports talent pool members whilst on assignment with coaching, mentoring and other development opportunities to enable the individual to successfully deliver whilst gaining experience and expertise to apply for permanent roles.

NHS IMAS shared expertise and learning with the NHS to develop and retain future healthcare leaders by: -

- Working with the seven Regional Talent Management Programme Boards to re-establish support as required during 2024/25 and develop its internal Talent Management Programme and facilitation of stretch and experiential development assignments.
- Working in conjunction with the NHS England Regional Talent teams to co-produce a series of awareness workshops.
    - The purpose of the workshops was two-fold, first to increase the awareness of the opportunities available via NHS IMAS with individuals who may be seeking career

development via interim assignments; second, to increase awareness of the NHS IMAS ‘core business’ to organisations that may be looking to utilise local and regional talent for their interim vacancies.

    - These workshops will continue through 2025/26, with developments currently in place.

- Working with regional colleagues and regional Chief People Officer and Human Resources Director networks to host a series of awareness raising sessions for NHS IMAS core business.

Other talent schemes supported by NHS IMAS included:

- Working nationally to oversee the Chief Nursing Officer Exceptional Leaders Network.
- Managing a bespoke register of experienced Improvement Directors who can be deployed to work in challenged organisations across the NHS.
- Identifying and managing a bespoke register of individuals with significant Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) experience to provide Trusts with intensive support, as commissioned by the National IPC Programme Lead.
- Supporting NHSE with the development of bespoke pools focused on supporting organisations that require individuals to provide Mental Health Improvement support, including two specialist Mental Health Intervener pools (both Adult and Children).

Flexible Resourcing for NHS England

NHS IMAS continued to work alongside NHSE’s Human Resources and Organisational Development colleagues with its resourcing and deployment operating model.

NHS IMAS has previously supported this programme by establishing ways of working such as refining a ‘front door’ deployment process to deliver the organisation's priorities and developing processes to support flexible resourcing across the organisation, including Regions and NHSE's deployment of resources to priority programmes.

Following the proposed NHSE integration with the Department of Health and Social Care, work to develop and agree the model has been paused with further work planned to take place in 2025/26.

Quality Management System

In 2024/25, NHS IMAS was again successful in maintaining the International Standards ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 14001:2015, following a re-assessment to maintain certification in January 2025.

The service has successfully held ISO standards for 14 years to ensure the highest operational standards are maintained. The first, a Quality Management System, which is certified to the international standard ISO 9001:2015 and the second, an Environmental Management System, which is certified to the standard ISO 14001:2015.

Specifically aligning to the 14001:2015 Environmental Management System, NHS IMAS continued home working arrangements in 2024/25. Working from home and severely curtailing commute travel, allowed NHS IMAS staff to continually contribute to NHS England's aim to reduce C02 emissions between April 2024 and March 2025.

To further reduce its carbon footprint, the NHS IMAS Continuous Improvement team continued to share relevant information around the benefits of NHSE's commitment to the reduction of carbon emissions.

Utilising both of these operational and environmental processes and continuously improving them, NHS IMAS can continue to develop the service it provides to meet the changing needs of clients; to ensure a quality service continues to be delivered and the future impact on the environment continues to be reduced.

Communications and Engagement

In 2024/25, NHS IMAS implemented the recommendations from the Communications Review commissioned in 2023/24. This has included the production of a comprehensive stakeholder map, to enable the team to disseminate a series of targeted communications across social media platforms; bulletin posts; webinar series; and, directly with CPO and HRD colleagues. With the primary incentive to encourage key stakeholders to utilise NHS IMAS for interim and consultancy support and to support them on their wider talent programmes; but also:

- To encourage and facilitate the NHS to use the wealth of skills already available to it, to improve and sustain the quality of health care services in the local communities they serve; and
- To offer mentoring schemes targeted at specific groups of senior staff including Chairs, Chief Executives, Chief People Officers and Operational leaders (Proud2B Ops Network).

NHS IMAS also communicated bespoke areas of work, such as:

- Supporting the operational implementation and deployment of experienced senior leaders to challenged NHS organisations. Leading the management and coordination of a rapid deployment model.
- Providing access to specialist Mental Health Improvement expertise required by the system. This also includes managing the register and deployment of Mental Health Senior Interveners (Adult and Children's) to support systems with their most complex long stay cases to discharge patients into community services, delivering additional bed capacity, saving NHS money and improving patient experience.

NHS IMAS has also developed and rebranded a number of communications materials of different platforms including the website, social media and promotional materials.

Planning for the 2025/26 year has been completed with a focus on expanding NHS IMAS' market penetration.

Five Year Forward View

In mid-2024, NHS IMAS commenced the process of developing an ambitious Five-Year Strategy with a Vision to be the first 'point of contact' for all NHS organisations in England that need interim management and leadership support.

In partnership with NHS Elect, NHS IMAS launched a consultation with over 300 NHS stakeholders to gain insights from the system and define its direction for the next five years. This initiative aims to ensure that its systems and processes evolve in alignment with broader system developments, enabling it to continue delivering an excellent, flexible, and responsive service to the NHS as the system undergoes further changes.

Work on the development of the five-year strategy will continue to be developed in 2025/26. However, the key objectives will be to ensure NHS IMAS:

- is the first 'point of contact' for all NHS organisations in England that need interim management and leadership support (Band 8d and above)
- is visible and accessible for staff across organisations and regions in England looking to undertake senior interim opportunities
- provides organisations access to experienced NHS managers who can support the NHS' high priority, strategic areas, including those mentioned in the Darzi 10-year plan, the Government's three shifts, and the transition to the NHS new ways of working

- utilises the talent which exists in the NHS to provide a high-quality service to NHS organisations and individuals, that delivers for patients

Looking ahead to 2025/26

In March 2025, it was announced that the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England will increasingly merge functions, ultimately leading to NHS England being fully integrated into DHSC. NHS IMAS will continue to work with the NHS IMAS Strategic Advisory Board and Partners to ensure its systems and processes evolve in line with Government vison and wider system developments so it can continue to deliver an excellent and appropriate service to the NHS as the system continues to change.

NHS IMAS will begin delivery on its Five-Year Strategy developed in consultation with stakeholders, gaining insight from the system to define its direction for the next five years ensuring its priorities, systems and processes evolve in line with the Government's three shifts and wider system developments so it can continue to deliver an excellent flexible and responsive service to the NHS as the system continues to change.

The initial focus, in line with current priorities, is to reduce agency spend working in collaboration with NHSE's National Temporary Staffing Team and to develop a revised process for all VSM recruitment; support the operational implementation and deployment of strong leaders in challenged places; and build upon bespoke registers to deploy expertise as a priority system requirement. Further developing peer to peer mentoring schemes and facilitating talent management opportunities will build NHS talent for the future.

NHS IMAS will ensure that it supports high quality NHS pool members and leaders to undertake challenging roles by considering what further training and development can be provided for them and will work closely with colleagues developing Talent Management Programmes. Working proactively with the NHS' Regional and National Talent Management Programmes, NHS IMAS will utilise its' established systems and processes to match and support them on appropriate stretch assignments as and when required by NHS organisations.

Working with HR&OD colleagues in NHSE, NHS IMAS will support an agile way of working to enable the mobilisation of the required skills and experience to meet the prioritised needs of the organisation.

NHS IMAS will continue to raise its profile and reduce the need for organisations to source from private sector agencies, increasing the number of its' NHS IMAS pool members with specific skills to provide support to organisations under pressure.