

Health Sector Community Panel Notes

MEETING: Health Sector Community Panel Meeting

LOCATION: Microsoft Teams Meeting

DATE: 3 September 2024

TIME: 14:30 – 16:00

ATTENDEES: Shekh Motin (chair), Maddy Kennedy, Sailesh Shah, Sotiris Kyriacou, Tim Kelland, Finn Maxwell, Veer Parmar, Melanie Venes (ACCA), Bridget Foley (ACCA), Susan Love (ACCA), Lloyd Powell (ACCA)

APOLOGIES: Winifred Sarbah, Joshua Ngeresa, Natalie Bennetts, Patrice Adams, Dawn Scrafield, Teresa Au, Saqib Raza, Connie Atugonza, Kendre Chiles, Sinead McCormack, Mohammed Itsham Khan, Catherine Phillips

Introduction

The Panel reaffirmed its agreement to the panel principles, namely that panels aim to enhance and build community working with the designated sector and community manager, that panel members should come to meetings prepared to contribute and engage with ACCA members they represent and to be prepared to discuss matters of interests to members working in the sector.

Policy & Insights Update

Susan Love provided an update on the policy prospectus which was presented to the Panel as part of the Volunteers day in June. The prospectus set out ACCA's priorities in the UK for the next Government in areas such as audit reform and corporate governance, getting the foundations right in terms of tax simplification and problems with HMRC, getting the regulation right for AI and sustainability. ACCA has been pushing these priorities by writing to the relevant new ministers in the Government and responding to the new initiatives flowing out from the new Government's manifesto. ACCA is keen for feedback on potential changes to employment, the upcoming Budget on 30 October, support for the public sector and potential changes to taxes and pensions. [A survey](#) has been launched to capture this feedback.

The Panel expressed concern about the impact of taxes and changes to pensions that could reduce capacity in the NHS if those changes encouraged early retirement. There is also a need to change the procurement rules.

ACCA also produces research reports and is currently working on a report about public sector productivity which will be published alongside the Public Sector Conference in November.

Discussion and insight from panel members

On the talent side for the NHS, the key focus now is rolling out a talent strategy. In my role with the Skills Development Network which looks after professional development for finance, procurement, digital and estates, we're piloting this at junior level and rolling out a talent identification framework that's been designed by the NHSE.

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The focus is on moving people into qualification because half of our finance population isn't studying or qualified. We're encouraging that group of staff to move into some sort of qualification.

There is a focus on supporting qualifieds and senior directors as well. One NHS Finance is an NHSE sponsored process for supporting professional development for finance and has work streams around forming a regional Academy boards, accreditation, and encouraging innovation and best practise sharing within the NHS. NHSE is launching a people and skills strategy for the procurement function with an emphasis on digital skills and data. **Sotiris Kyriacou**

The NHS would like to create an equitable approach for everybody in the NHS finance community that gives people the support and development need to apply for opportunities. Everybody has to go through an open competition, but people are more likely to be successful if they are supported. In the Northwest London area, we are implementing the talent conversation as part of a normal appraisal and personal development process. The ACCA qualification needs to have more focus on the technology, AI and digital side so that newly qualified accountants are both accountants and analysts. **Shekh Motin**

There is a gap of accountants with digital skills. We've started appointing financial analysts alongside digital analysts. The former have to be qualified accountants, but digital analysts do not. We then support the digital analysts to come into the financial analyst space and become qualified accountants. **Tim Kelland**

It's good that AI is now part of the ACCA qualification, but Members need access to professional development to be able to upskill as well. **Mandy Kennedy**

NB. ACCA resources and certificates for upskilling in the AI arena:

- [ACCA AI resources](#)
- [AI for Accountants online course](#)
- [ACCA AI Monitor research and reports](#)
- [ACCA Certificate in Data Analytics](#)

The biggest issue for the last 12-18 months for SME Life Science businesses has been access to equity investment and grant funding for startup businesses and even established businesses that are trying to do something different. The sentiment in funding markets is so risk averse at the moment that some businesses have had to be wound up. The ability to get grant funding has narrowed significantly since Brexit. It has also been noticeable that for the past 6-12 months, it has been quiet on the recruitment front and businesses are not pushing forward. **Mandy Kennedy**

Skills development and promoting internal talent is very gradual work encouraging staff to take qualifications. Funding is also an issue for health research, as is finding enough people to take part in research surveys but that is slowly improving. **Sailesh Shah**

At Chelsea Westminster, we have obtained our level 2 Future Focussed Finance accreditation which is accreditation on training and development of finance professionals. There are only a few Trusts in London that have level 2 accreditation, and we can now

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aspire to go to the next level that only a few Trusts in the country have achieved. The accreditation helps with staff morale and recruitment. I'm leading on the AI group and there is still fact finding to do. At Chelsea Westminster, we have good AI on RPA on the VHR function so we have a tangible output that can be showcased and documented when the review is finished. **Veer Parmar**

There is unlikely to be any more money at the aggregate level for the NHS in the upcoming Budget, but if there is any available then it will be targeted. Aside from population growth, the needs are increasing from an ageing population. People sleeping in corridors is a regular occurrence in the NHS now. It isn't clear where the money to pay for the public sector and NHS pay awards will come from – whether it is new money or money recycled within the NHS budget which would mean something else is de-prioritised such as digital. However there is still some optimism that the new Government appears to be committed to public services and the health service. At a local level, every single NHS organisation is struggling with quality of care as well as money which has become very tight post Covid. There is even talk of reversing investment and that will have an impact on headcount. Short term decisions could impact on programmes that would lead to longer term financial sustainability. However the digital side will help to improve productivity which is the current struggle.

The Government's help is needed to stop the constant reorganisation that sees talent leave and then return but there is no continuity at policy level and it disrupts innovation.

We are doing work on sustainability at a local level and everything we do has a green assessment against it, just as it would be for an equality assessment. My local HFMA conference in October will have something on the sustainability area. **Shekh Motin**

One NHS Finance has been working to create health and wellbeing champions but with limited success. There is scope for support from professional bodies. **Sotiris Kyriacou NB.** *ACCA runs a talking wellbeing series.*

The Panel transition period is coming to an end and work is taking place on the terms of reference for the new Panel mode. There will be more information in the next few months about next steps in the process.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 3 December – 14:30 – 16:00.