Board meeting

22 July 2025

Workforce engagement: update from the lead Non-Executive Director

Purpose of paper

For discussion

Board action required

The Board is asked to receive the update and discuss the issues raised.

Brief summary

Bee Wee has been designated as the NED with specific responsibility for engaging with the workforce, in line with corporate governance best practice. The attached report provides a summary of the work undertaken in this role over the last year and key findings for the Board to consider.

Board sponsor

Bee Wee, lead NED for workforce engagement

## Workforce engagement: progress report for NICE Board July 2025

1. The role of lead NED for workforce engagement was formally launched in Jan 2024. The Board received my first formal report in July 2024, and a verbal update in December 2025.
2. Over the past 12 months, I have undertaken the following: hosted 1:1 drop in sessions; published blogs; contributed to all staff briefings when invited; attended Staff Network meetings on a 4-6 monthly cycle; attended Staff Network Chairs’ Forum on a 3-4 monthly cycle; participated in Freedom to Speak Up champions and ambassadors’ meetings; spoken at the NICE Medicines and Prescribing Group conference in Nov 2024; hosted a stand at the NICE Connect Day in London in May 2024; introduced the concept of lead NED for workforce engagement at the Committee Chairs’ Forum; helped to connect the Deputy Chief People Officer with the Chief People Officer at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for learning exchanges.
3. Close alignment and communication with the People Team are clearly important. I now have monthly meetings with the Deputy Chief People Officer, and we are joined by the Chief People Officer on alternate months.
4. The following are key points for the Board to note:
   1. I raised the issue of psychological safety as an issue of concern last July. This appears to be less prominent during the past year. In part, this may be due to the focused work on NICE values and behaviours that the People Team has been working on over the past 12 months.
   2. The restorative justice practice at NICE is more embedded and, although still early days, I have heard positive feedback about its impact, including from the UNISON lead.
   3. The Staff Networks are working hard and have a very positive impact. For example, the Race and Equality (REN) Network leadership was very quick to respond with supportive interventions when the riots took place last summer, and felt well supported by ET colleagues. The NICE And Proud (NAP) Network facilitated thoughtful discussions on transgender concerns, in the light of the Supreme Court ruling on the legal definition of a woman. The Disability Advocacy and Wellbeing (DAWN) network have raised concern about how NICE as an organisation handles short term absences when sickness absence is related to disability as opposed to an illness. The Women in NICE (WIN) Network has flagged the issue of part time working on career progression and development opportunity.
   4. On the whole, staff networks feel well supported by their ET Sponsors though the engagement of the latter can be variable. However, a key concern that is arising, and remains under discussion, is that of the balance between providing safe spaces for specific subgroups, and inclusivity and facilitating freedom of speech. The staff networks plan a collective focus on raising awareness and actions around intersectionality.
   5. There has been feedback from some staff that the narrative around empowerment does not always penetrate through to front line staff. The People Team recognises this, and is working to develop leadership capabilities. It is hopeful that the improvement culture may help to improve this.
5. Plans for the next year:
   1. Continue to offer engagement through the Staff Networks and drop in sessions to provide staff with opportunities for 1:1 engagement, including those who do not participate in staff networks.
   2. The Deputy Chief Officer and I plan to hold periodic joint meetings with the Freedom to Speak Up Champions and Network Chairs to share ‘soft intel’ and triangulate our findings.
   3. The Board to have opportunity later this year to discuss the Bullying and Harassment Action Plan which they have only received by email so far.
   4. Targeted engagement work with the Committee members based on findings of a survey to be undertaken in the autumn.

Bee Wee

10th July 2025