

1. Please describe what actions you took when reviewing your Business Partner function? (you can describe the stages you went through)

When I set out to review our Business Partner function, I wanted to make sure we were truly adding strategic value across the organisation, not just reacting to issues, but shaping the future of our workforce. I approached it as a work in progress, knowing that transformation doesn't happen overnight. So I took a step-by-step approach that focused on both clarity and capability.

First, I began by focusing on role clarity, i.e. really getting under the skin of what it means to be an HR Business Partner in our NHS and in our Trust context. It wasn't just about redefining the role on paper; it was about understanding how HRBPs connect with clinical leaders, operational managers, and corporate services, and making sure they're positioned to support the Trust's People Plan and strategic goals. This helped us shift the mindset, from being mostly transactional and reactive, to becoming proactive, and on their way towards becoming strategic enablers.

At the same time, I recognised the need to be pragmatic. While we aimed to elevate the role, we also had to accept that some transactional elements would remain part of the day-to-day. These weren't just legacy tasks, they were essential for providing quick, efficient support to our stakeholders. For example, HRBPs still needed to step in early with HR advisory input, support pre-investigation reviews, or help move recruitment actions forward when delays were impacting services. It was about finding the right balance between strategic influence and operational responsiveness.

Next, as I continued to focus on development, I realised that self-awareness was a crucial starting point. Some team members naturally had it, while others needed support to build it. Drawing on my own journey as an HRBP, I understood how important it is to pause and reflect, not just on what we do, but how we do it. So, I mapped out the core capabilities we needed to strengthen across the team: workforce planning, organisational development, change management, and using data to inform business decisions.

To support this, we took a closer look at how feedback was being given to BPs, through supervision, appraisals, and day-to-day conversations. The aim was to give people a clearer sense of where they stood and what they could work on. We also signposted a range of learning resources, including HPMA training resources and its Strategic HR/OD network, opportunities to opt in for The Bravest Path <https://www.thebravestpath.com/> and highlighted CIPD content to guide their growth.

Then, I turned to communication and influence. Before our HRBPs faced the outside world, I wanted to make sure they felt confident and prepared. So I created safe spaces for our HRBPs to practice how they present themselves, whether that was refining their elevator pitch, sharing best practices from other Trusts, or simply learning how to build credibility with stakeholders. A big part of this was helping them use workforce data to tell compelling stories and influence decisions, even when they didn't have formal authority.

After that, I looked at the practical side - tools and resources. I wanted the team to understand the *why* behind using these tools, not just see them as tick-box exercises or administrative burdens. We talked about how things like workforce planning

templates, change readiness assessments, and equality impact assessments weren't just paperwork, they were essential for audit, governance, and making informed decisions.

I also encouraged the team to question the tools themselves. Were they fit for purpose? Could they be improved? This opened up some really constructive conversations about how we work and where we could do better. Alongside this, I made sure HRBPs felt confident using core systems like ESR, TRAC, HealthRoster, and BI dashboards—tools that are central to our day-to-day work but often under-leveraged. It was about shifting the mindset from compliance to empowerment—helping HRBPs see these tools as enablers of good practice and strategic insight.

Finally, to measure impact, we began tracking key metrics such as vacancy rates, sickness absence, and staff survey results etc., not just for reporting purposes, but to help HRBPs identify where their focus could make the biggest impact. These insights became a springboard for conversations with stakeholders, allowing them to guide decisions with greater confidence and clarity.

It was also important that they felt comfortable speaking the language of performance. For some, this meant building familiarity with KPIs and business metrics; for others, it was about shifting their mindset, seeing performance not as a judgment, but as a tool for improvement and strategic alignment. We worked together to demystify the data and make it meaningful to them in the first instance, before they took it into their business areas.

2. How do you think we can measure the performance of the BP function?

To be honest, measuring the performance of the Business Partner function isn't a perfect science, it's a mix of tangible metrics and softer indicators. It's something we're still working through, and it needs to be flexible enough to reflect the nature of the role.

We can start with the basics: for example looking at things like vacancy rates, sickness absence, and staff survey results. These give us a sense of where HRBPs are making or can make an impact, especially when they're working closely with managers to address issues or improve team dynamics. But we also need to be careful not to oversimplify, HRBPs don't directly control these outcomes, so it's more about how they influence them.

Feedback from stakeholders is another useful lens. Are managers feeling supported? Are HRBPs helping them think more strategically about workforce challenges? These kinds of conversations can tell us a lot about how the role is being experienced on the ground.

And then there's the internal development side. Are HRBPs growing in confidence, using data more effectively, and stepping into more strategic spaces? Are they contributing (or could they be contributing) to Trust-wide initiatives or leading change projects? To me, these are signs that the function is evolving in the right direction.

But it's not just about what they're doing, it's also about how comfortable they are doing it. I've spent time helping HRBPs get more confident with the language of performance, so they can talk about KPIs, outcomes, and impact in a way that feels natural and informed. It's still a work in progress, but it's encouraging to see them starting to own those conversations and bring that thinking into their business areas.

3. How do you develop and support your BP's?

Like I said before, developing and supporting our HR Business Partners is very much a work in progress, and it's not just about formal training. It starts with understanding where each person is in their journey. There's a real mix of experience and confidence levels across the team, so I've had to tailor support accordingly. For some, it's about going back to basics and rebuilding that strategic mindset; for others, it's about stretching their thinking and encouraging them to step into more complex, Trust-wide work.

I've focused a lot on creating safe spaces for learning, whether that's practicing how they present themselves, exploring data together, or reflecting on feedback. Ensuring supervision sessions help them to build self-awareness and track their growth. I've also encouraged them to tap into external networks like HPMA and CIPD, opt in for The Bravest Path and to take up stretch objectives that have real impact.

Support isn't just about development, it's also about being available. I make time for regular check-ins, offer coaching-style conversations, and try to be a sounding board when they're navigating tricky situations. It's about helping them build confidence, not just competence.

And I'm learning too. Supporting BPs means constantly adjusting, listening, and being open to what's working and what's not. It's not perfect, but we're moving in the right direction.

4. What is your vision for Business Partnering in the future?

I'm intentionally (and unapologetically) ambitious about my vision for Business Partnering, one where the function is clearly understood, genuinely respected, and actively supported by senior leaders across the organisation. This isn't just about giving HRBPs a seat at the table, it's about making sure they're not reduced to transactional support or pulled into operational firefighting. When that happens, the organisation loses out on the potential of this team.

We need to be intentional about how we use our HRBPs. That starts with choosing the right people for the role, because not everyone is cut out for Business Partnering. It requires a specific mindset: strategic thinking, resilience, curiosity, and the ability to influence without authority. This is a tribe you need to choose carefully.

Part of the vision is also about clearing up misunderstandings. Business Partnering isn't just about being available to fix problems, it's about shaping workforce strategy, enabling change, and helping leaders make better decisions. To do that well, we need to protect the role from being overloaded with ER caseloads. That work should sit with dedicated ER Advisors, so BPs can focus on the big stuff.

I also would like to see HRBPs playing a much stronger role in Trust-wide transformation- but should be brought in at the ideation stage, not at the end as a formality. Their value lies in early-stage utilisation, especially in areas like service redesign, workforce planning, and organisational development. To enable this, we need to invest in their development, equip them with the right tools and data, and give them space to grow.