

Testing Times

Nationwide Programme to Support Pathology Workforce Development During COVID-19

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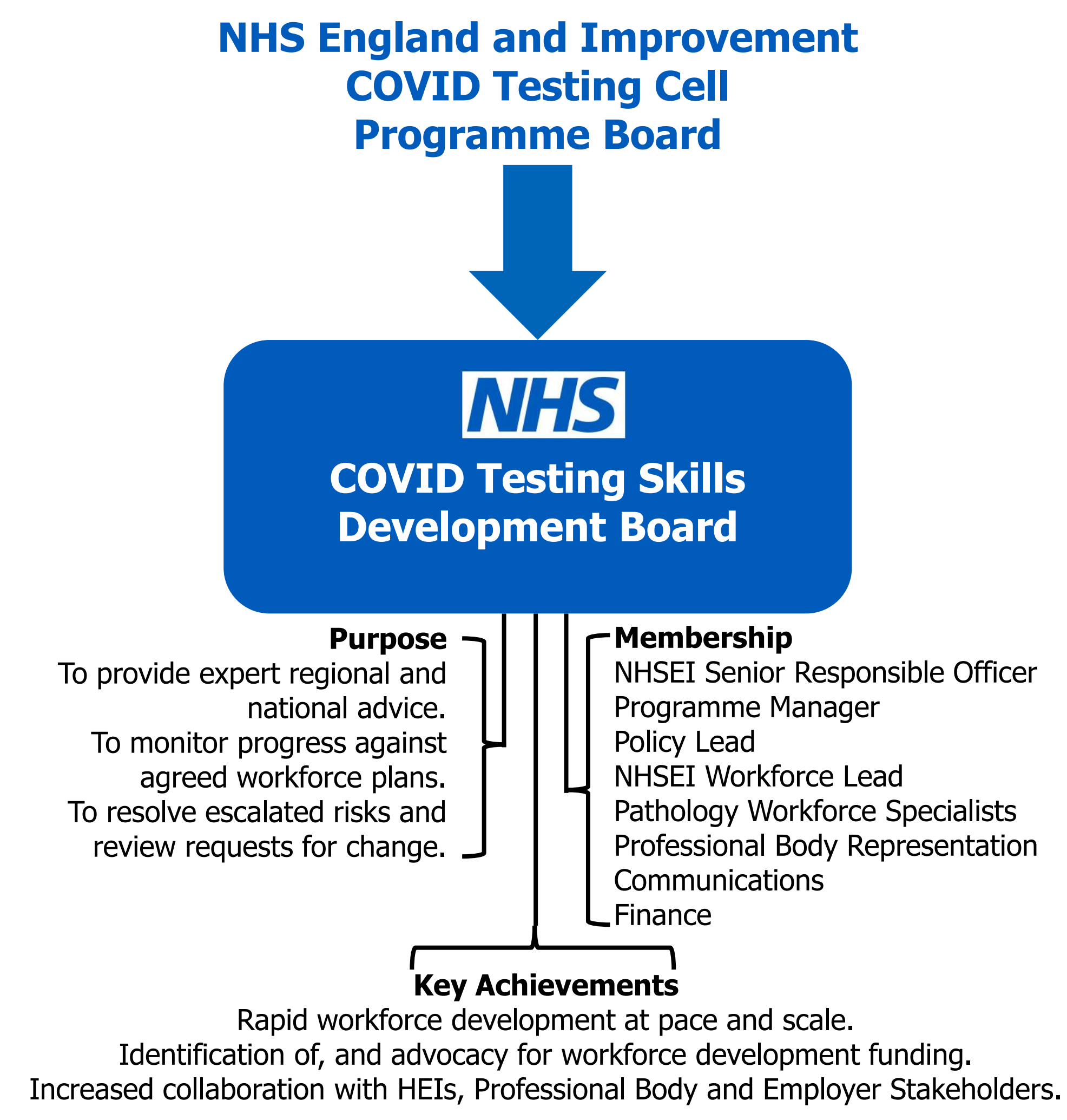
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From early 2020 pathology networks were required to substantially expand their virology testing capacity on top of 'usual business', highlighting the need to build resilience and to ensure they were able to respond to significant changes in demand. In addition to the pressures of COVID-19 testing, the need to ensure that those who were unable to undertake elective treatment during the first COVID-19 wave were able to receive treatment quickly further impacted upon the wider demand for clinical pathology services.

Feedback to the NHS England and Improvement COVID-19 Testing Cell highlighted the development of the pathology workforce as a key factor in expanding testing capacity resulting in significant investment to support workforce recruitment, upskilling and progression to aid the diagnostic response to the current and future challenges. This poster presents a narrative timeline detailing some of this work.



Practice educators are connecting and sharing learning resources between Laboratory services, regions, and national bodies to address shared workforce challenges in pathology.

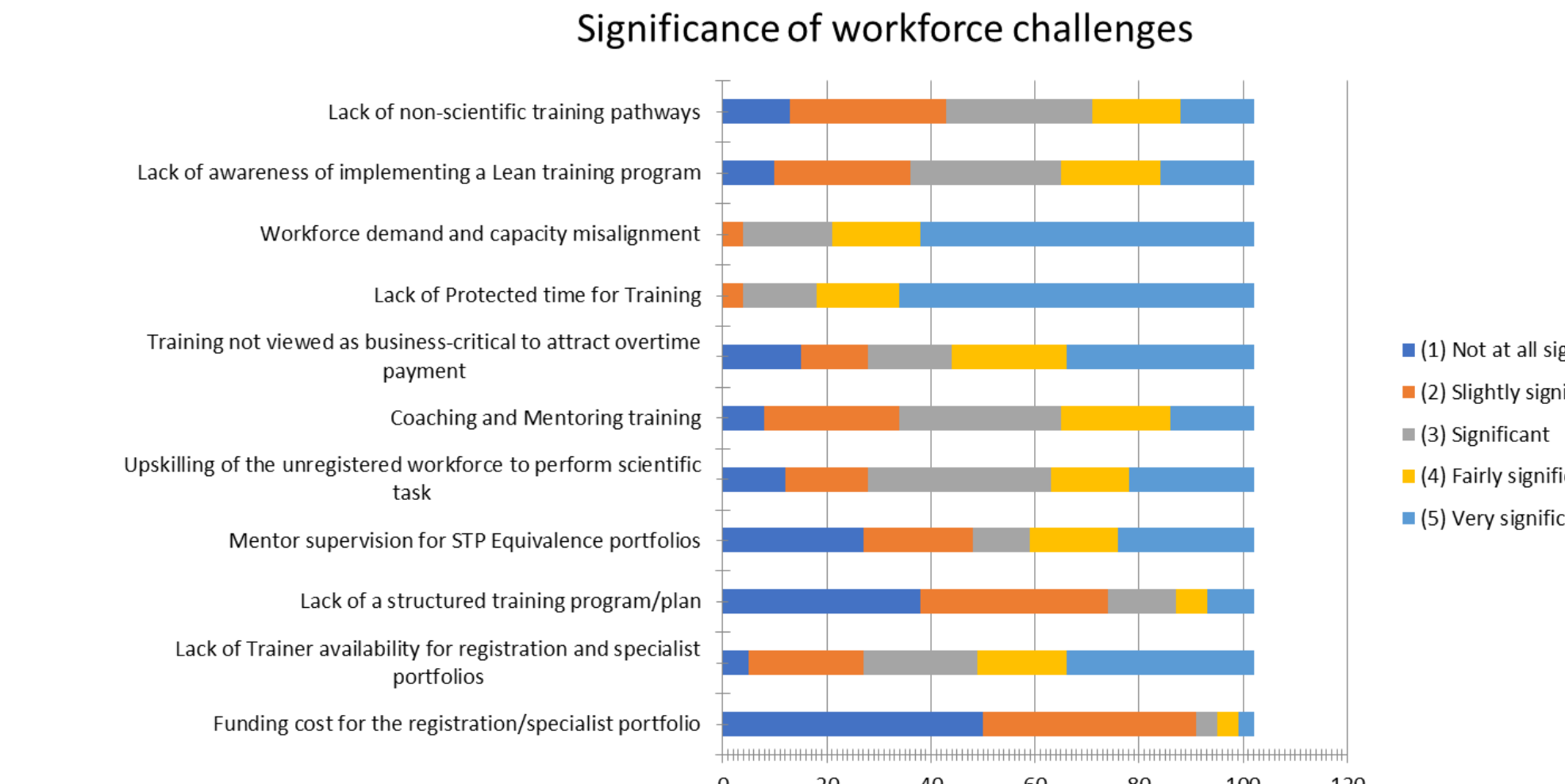
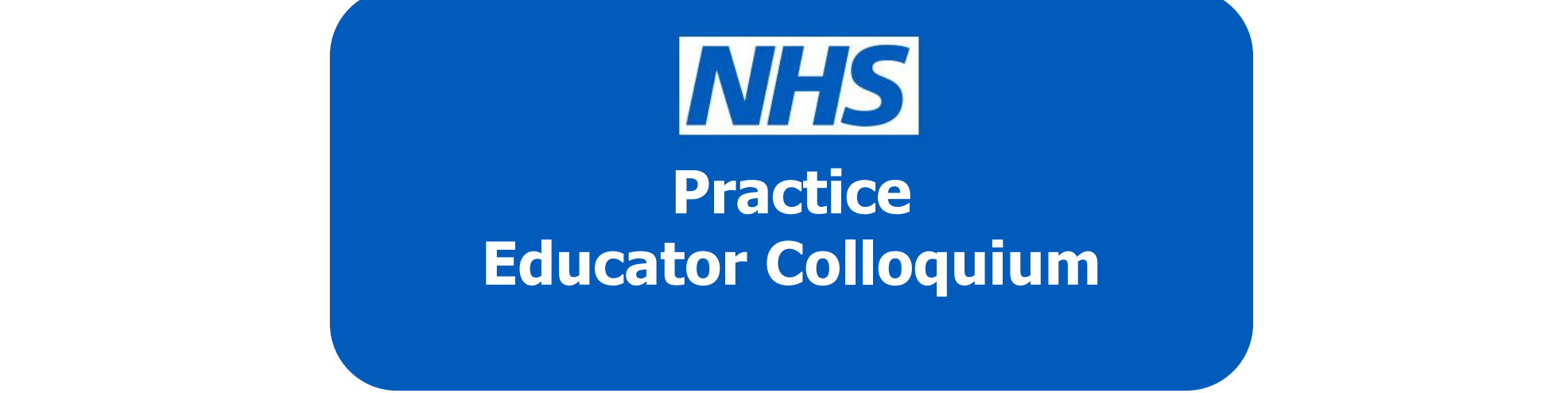


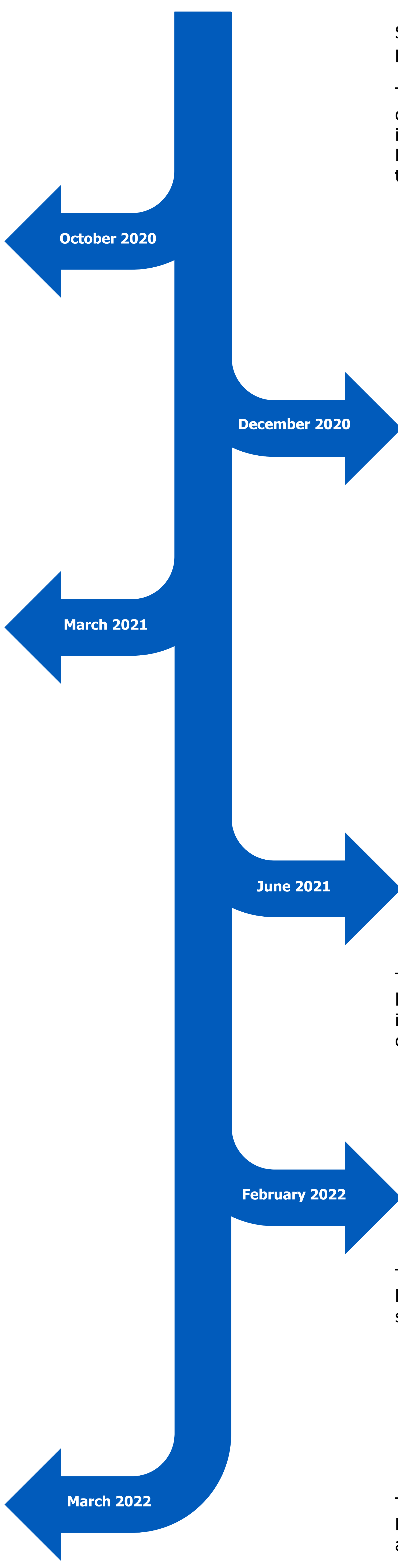
Figure 3: Gap analysis undertaken by pathology practice educators to identify barriers to workforce development.

- Supporting the upskilling of the pathology assistant workforce via a £2m HEE investment initiatives to support degree assessment and top-ups which will pump prime routes into the profession.
- Collaborate with professional bodies, HEI and Networks to fast track upskilling routes and resource sharing on a national scale
- Identifying and addressing system barriers and workforce gaps to a sustainable pathology workforce
- Increasing the training capacity via collaboration, coordination and administration of policy guidance.
- Increasing pathology workforce via apprenticeships, scientific training and e-learning.

Figure 4: Pathology practice educators – key achievements to date.

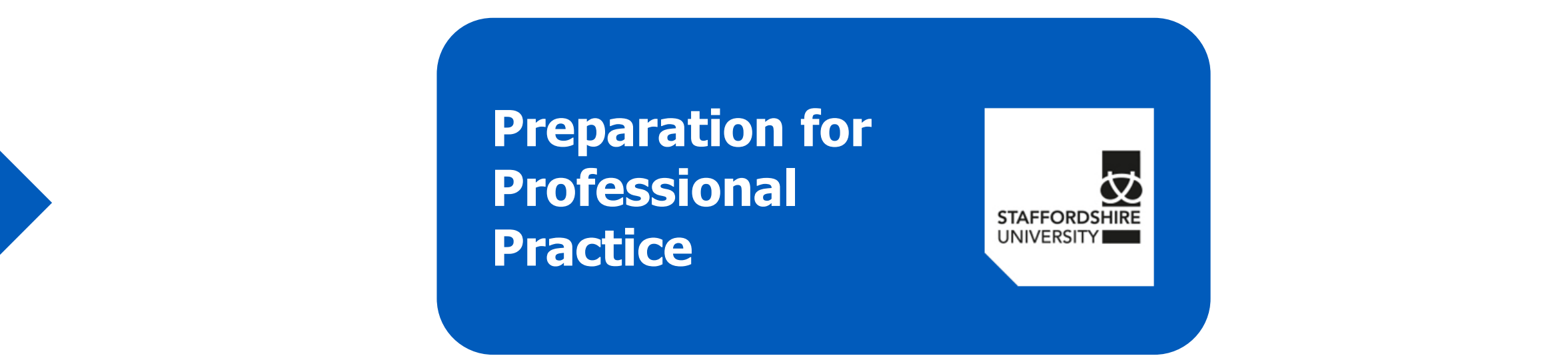


Successes and challenges from the first year will be shared in an online colloquium in March. Scan the QR code to access resources from the Pathology Workforce Development site on NHS Futures.



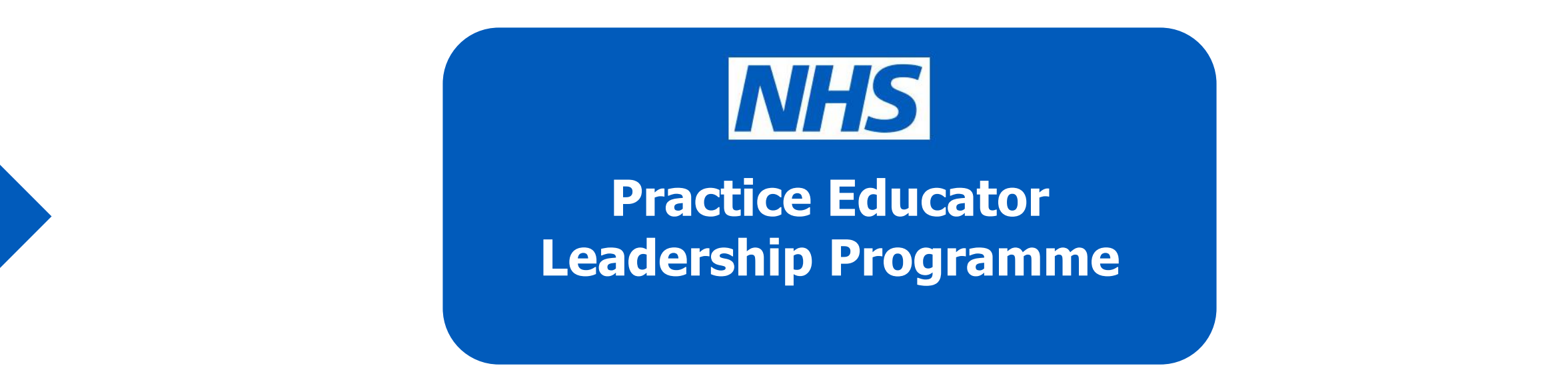
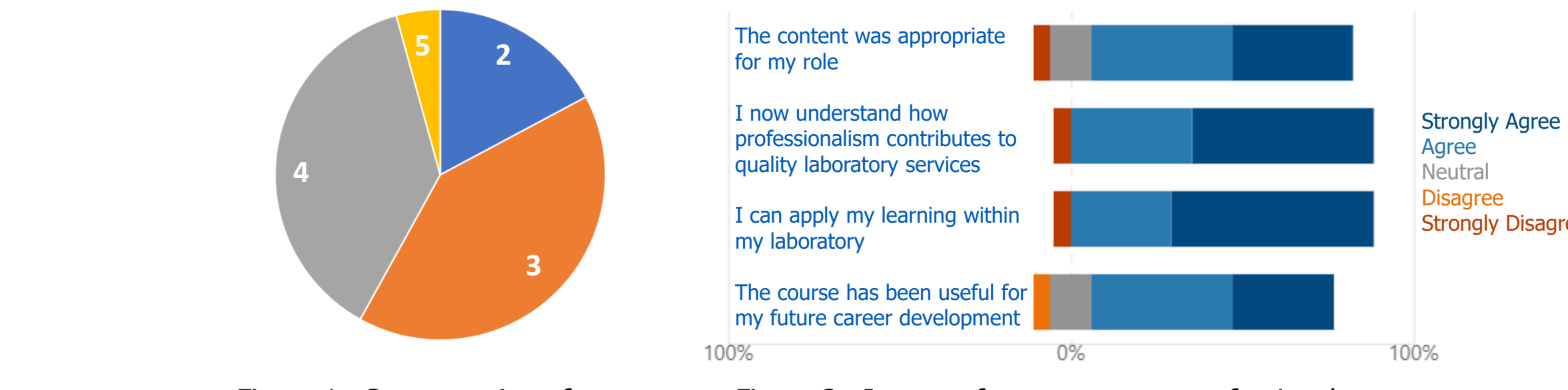
Staffordshire University provided a self-directed online package to develop patient-centred, professional practice skills within the new pathology workforce.

The online course ensured professional practice skills were delivered in a consistent and thorough way, making sure that new recruits understood the importance of their role to patient care. Learning material aligned to the IBMS Registration Portfolio so that staff could use this in developing their portfolio towards professional registration.

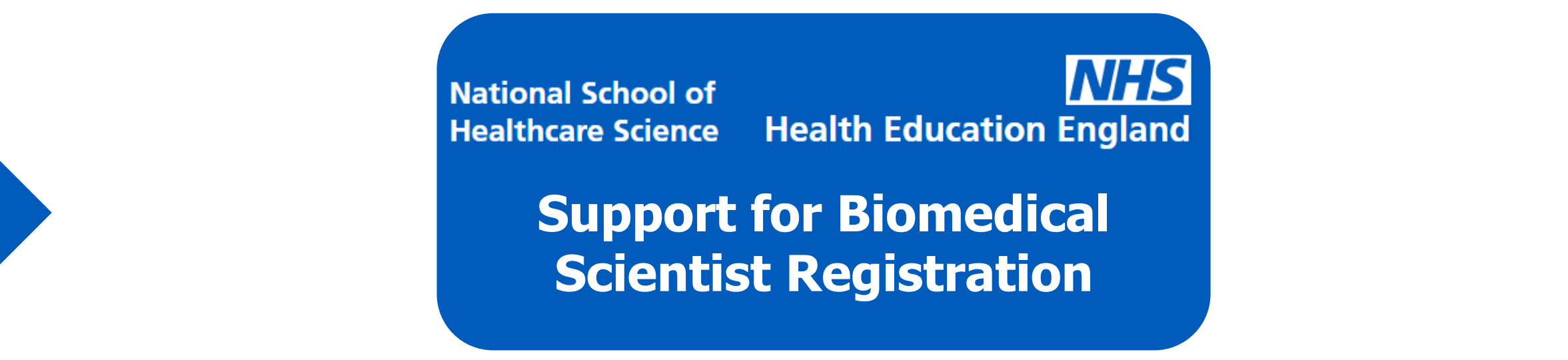


78% Percentage of participants with existing degree qualification

118 Participants fully completing the programme



To support practice educators' development as change agents, a bespoke leadership programme provided training in stakeholder engagement, coaching, influencing, action learning sets and provided a space for group co-production, collaboration and personal development.



The National School of Healthcare Science, part of Health Education England, have delivered a funding boost of more than £2m, supporting the pipeline for staff working across Pathology across England.



This funding support will increase the numbers of Biomedical Scientists across England and will help current workforce shortages, with demand around service and workforce increasing, on top of the pandemic testing workload.