

# IMPACT REPORT

## FY 2025



Certified



Corporation



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# niche

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE CONSULTING

## Welcome to our second impact report



**Kate Jury**  
Managing Partner, Niche

We are delighted to share our 2025 **Impact Report** with you. This year has been groundbreaking for us in so many ways, and we have been provided with some great opportunities for learning.

This year has also been incredibly challenging on many levels for all of our staff, all of whom take their responsibilities incredibly seriously and all of whom care deeply for families and for the staff that we work alongside.

This has been the year where we have directly seen the impact of social media and how it is used to rush to judgement, influence, and share misinformation.

One thing that is absolutely clear to us is that how trauma affects people can be fundamental as to how they receive and communicate information. We need to do much more to work in a 'trauma informed' way as a business. This year all members of staff participated in trauma training which we found so helpful. We are now working on how we can be more trauma informed in our reports and also in the information we provide to both families and staff.

Trust in the public sector is low, and this also means that trust in people employed by the public sector also tends to be low. Next year we will continue to stress the importance of the facility of independence, particularly as the work of NHS England winds down.

We will continue on our mission to '**safely surface the truth**' but we also recognise that this sometimes now means that we work in an environment of 'post truth' where 'feelings become facts', and social media (and some areas of mainstream media) is used to promulgate mistrust.

*Independence is now more crucial than ever.*

## Introduction

This year has been one of consolidation and delivery; as we have used the platform of our Employee-Owned Trust and B Corp status to build a firm and financially stable business. We remain one of only a very small handful of consultancy practices which are both an EOT and a B Corp.

This report presents an analysis of our impact as an organisation over the past year. It takes into account: the work we deliver, our workforce, and our social and environmental impact.

### 1. The highlights of 2024/25

During the year, we completed a total of 58 projects, more than one a week, and an increase of more than a quarter on the previous year. By type of project, the single biggest proportion was investigations into serious incidents in mental health services, at 57% of our workload.

When considered by client group, our largest single patient/service user group is people with mental health problems. Almost three-quarters of our work is with that group of people, with topics ranging from community-based services for common mental health problems, to complex secure care.



#### Some project highlights have included:

- Completion of a multi-year evaluation of the community mental health transformation programme, across all five boroughs in West Yorkshire. This project involved well over 300 interviews, and analysis of data from a very wide range of primary and secondary care services.
- A substantial review of CAMHS for a private provider, stimulating and supporting a detailed and evidence-based review of organisational and commercial strategy.
- A review across several areas of England to understand the provision for young people with complex mental health needs. This review has taken into account national research and learning and also best practice employed internationally. Supporting young minds is a vital area of healthcare delivery and one where effective early intervention matters.
- Support to the governance of two merger processes affecting four NHS Trusts in London, working to advise on post-merger organisational arrangements, and the details of a patient benefit case.
- Completion of an assurance review following an earlier investigation into inpatient mental health services for particularly vulnerable young people. This “closed the loop” on the overall improvement process, by checking whether and how the provider had implemented the recommendations of our investigation report. We found that considerable progress had indeed been made in taking forward actions in response to our investigation, confirming the longer-term impact of our work.
- A major review of maternity and neonatal services in Swansea (more over the page).

# Maternity and Neonatal review in Swansea Bay

Niche were commissioned at a later stage on this review and were asked to support with governance aspects of the review and with supporting the existing review teams (a clinical review team, an engagement review team, Oversight Panel and review chair) were already in place. Additionally, there is an advocacy service in Wales called Llais, who were a key stakeholder in the work. This was an unusual working arrangement for Niche and much work was required to establish a workable infrastructure for the project, defining roles properly and making sure the project had an effective governance structure in place.

There is a lot of learning for the Health Board in terms of how they should approach a review like this in the future. Particularly, that family engagement occurs early so that the Terms of Reference can be developed collaboratively. Without this in place the review was not fully trusted by some families, and this was understandable.

Maternity services are currently (and rightly so) under a great deal of scrutiny and there are countless examples of women having been failed and not listened to. The vicarious trauma on families and staff is also pronounced. Problems with maternity services seem to be endemic. It is no wonder that families galvanise and campaign when they have been affected by poor care.

Niche were confident that we could deliver a really useful, if not groundbreaking review for the people of Swansea. Particularly a review which takes the evidence further in understanding data to support the 'why it happened' and not just the 'what happened'. Only by understanding services from a 360-degree perspective can the right recommendations for 'repair' be made.

The review took in the views of over 1,000 families and we also used Nvivo, a qualitative data programme, which provided us with some really interesting insights about what the women and families were saying. The most pronounced findings were around communication and how women felt unheard. Additionally, trauma was an incredibly important theme and far more women and birth partners experience trauma from pregnancy and childbirth than has been estimated.



## 2. Delivery

During the year, we completed a total of 58 projects, an increase of 26% from the previous year. By type of project, the single biggest proportion remains investigations into serious incidents in mental health services, at 57% of our workload. Beyond this, we provided a range of other project types:



Projects by project type		
Mental Health Investigation	33	57%
Non-Mental Health Investigation	5	9%
Assurance	6	10%
Governance	4	7%
Modelling	3	5%
Evaluation	5	9%
Other	2	3%

When considered by client group, our largest single patient/service user group is people with mental health problems. This proportion has risen over the past year. Beyond those numbers, our cases however also involve a wide range of non-mental health conditions. Maternity services are a growing field of work, with several projects spanning last year into 2025-26.



Projects by client group		
Mental health	35	67%
Other adult (non-mental health)	9	17%
CAMHS	3	6%
Maternity	5	10%

When considered by region, we have maintained a good spread of work across England. Growing regions have been London, and the North East and Yorkshire, as well as work completed outside England and Wales.



Projects by client region		
Midlands and East	11	21%
North West	5	10%
South West	3	6%
London	12	23%
North East & Yorkshire	8	15%
South East	7	13%
Wales	1	2%
Other	5	10%

### 3. Delivering excellence

- We completed a **multi-year evaluation** of the community mental health transformation programme, across all five boroughs in West Yorkshire. This project involved well over 300 interviews, and analysis of data from a very wide range of primary and secondary care services.
- We advised on and supported the governance of two **merger processes** affecting four NHS Trusts in London, including the details of a patient benefit case – challenging all parties to consider and plan for improvements in patients’ experience and outcomes.
- We completed an **assurance review** following an earlier investigation into inpatient mental health services for particularly vulnerable young people. This “closed the loop” on the overall improvement process, by checking whether and how the provider had implemented the recommendations of our investigation report. We found that considerable progress had indeed been made in taking forward actions in response to our investigation, confirming the longer-term impact of our work.
- We evaluated the impact of a diverse range of services, including digital and social inclusion coordinators, O2matic devices (for automating the administration of oxygen), and a selective licensing scheme for **social housing**.
- We undertook a large **cost of care review** of a group of care homes in the North East, this involved extensive financial analysis.
- We have undertaken several governance reviews including **Well-led reviews**, one of which was at one of the largest trusts in the country.

Throughout the year, we have continued to gain excellent feedback from clients. Almost all of our work is repeat work from previous clients – the most honest form of feedback there is.

### 4. Certifications

- During the year, we successfully transitioned to the most up-to-date international standard for information governance, ISO 27001:2022. We are also certified under Cyber Essentials. We therefore provide an assured system for managing the very sensitive data with which we work.
- We also maintained our certification under ISO 9001:2015 for our quality management.
- We maintained our B Corp certification, confirming the social value of our work and the way we deliver it. Work is now underway to prepare for our recertification in 2027 against the new B Corp standards



## 5. Workforce

### *Participation in employee ownership*

2024/25 was Niche's first full year of operation as an Employee-Owned Trust (EOT). All Niche staff are co-owners of the business. They therefore all have the following rights within the EOT:

- To participate in the meetings of the Niche Co-Owners' Council.
- To seek nomination as a staff representative on the EOT Trust Board.
- To serve as a member of the EOT Trust Board, subject to election by the Co-owners' Council, and subject to the constitution of the EOT Trust Board.
- (After a minimum of nine months' service) to receive a share of bonuses paid by the Trust to its employee members.

Both the Co-Owners' Council and the EOT Board have met regularly throughout the year and are providing an increasingly valuable means of sharing information about Niche and guiding our future as a business. At the year end we were able to pay the first profit-share bonus to all staff.

### *Employee satisfaction*

We are proud of our skilled workforce and prioritise their satisfaction of work. We pride ourselves in allowing our staff to work flexibly, enjoying a good work/life balance. We conducted our annual staff survey in December 2024. The results were overall very positive.

#### **All staff agreed with the statements:**

- We're allowed to work flexibly
- Our line manager would be supportive in a crisis
- We have the materials and equipment we need
- We're adequately IT literate
- Co-workers are committed to quality

#### **Almost all staff agreed with the statements:**

- We know what is expected of us in our role
- We feel our work is important
- Our opinions seem to count
- We're treated fairly and with respect
- We can access other colleagues for support
- We're able to speak openly in 1-1s
- We know how to raise concerns
- We have access to the information we need
- Our supervisor appears to care about us as a person
- Relationships between colleagues are good
- Partners work well as a team

We did hear some concerns about job security, and about pressure of work, both reflecting the realities of a pressurised year for the business, and our need to make some redundancies in-year.

### **Balance of salaried and contract workforce**

- Approximately 74% of our delivery is via our knowledgeable and experienced salaried staff; the balance is substantially specialist (usually clinical) experts who contribute to our investigation work. All contract staff are very well remunerated; we do not have any form of low-paid contract workforce.

### **Payment of living wage and pay ratios**

- The national living wage during the year was £11.44 per hour. At Niche full-time hours, this equates to £21,564 per year. All our staff are paid well above this rate.
- Our high to low pay ratio was 3.5 (down from 4.6 the previous year); our high to median pay ratio was 1.6 (down from 1.7 the previous year). Both evidence a considerably flatter structure than typical. The Equality Trust report that in FTSE 350 companies, the high to low pay ratio has a median value of 52:1; for the public sector it is 20:1, and for the voluntary sector 10:1.

### **Training and development**

- The principal focus of training and development work over the year has been work to ensure our approaches are fully trauma-informed. Niche has extensive experience in ensuring compassionate approaches to all of the staff and stakeholders that we encounter during the course of our work. We have arranged and provided bespoke training to all our team, ensuring that: our staff have an enhanced awareness of how to spot trauma, how to work with trauma and how to ensure that, through our work, we do not introduce or re-traumatise anyone.
- We also participated in training on up-to-date HR practice and continue to provide access to refresher training in information governance. Relevant staff have been given training in new financial systems, supported by our new accountants, appointed during the year.



## **6. Community**

### **Diversity of ownership and leadership**

- Our leadership team comprises our Partners, our Directors, and the Independent Chair of our EOT (7 people.) This group is majority female.

### **The people who use our services**

- This year we have placed considerable focus upon how we can ensure that families receive sufficient information about the investigation process. Whilst it is essential that we maintain our independence it is also important that families and staff understand what is meant by independence, how it works in practice and how to seek further help if they need it.
- This year we have started working with a PR agency called High Rise. Over the next 12 months they are going to support us with how we reach and engage, as typically, we have preferred to maintain a low profile in the work that we do.



## Local suppliers

Our main suppliers are our associates, who are based throughout the country. We use a local property company as our office supplier, and work with local suppliers for office supplies, confidential waste management, and ICT support.

# 7. Environment

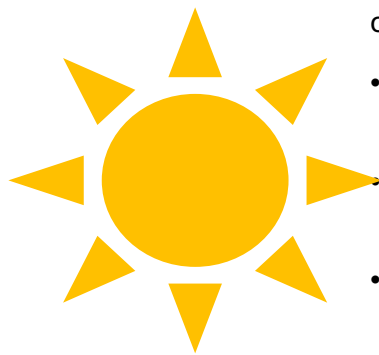
## Carbon emissions – monitoring and reductions

Our carbon emissions have fallen by 23% over the year, largely as a result of changing our electricity supply to a completely renewable tariff.

EMISSIONS	TOTAL (tCO <sub>2</sub> e)
Scope 1	0 - there are no direct emissions from company activities
Scope 2	0 – all our energy consumption is now on a renewable tariff.
Scope 3	Upstream transport 0 Waste 0 Business travel 1.720 tCO <sub>2</sub> e Employee commuting 3.784 tCO <sub>2</sub> e Downstream transport 0
<b>Total Emissions</b>	5.504 tCO <sub>2</sub> e

Over the lifetime of our carbon reduction plan, we have additionally committed to:

- Promote use of remote methods for client engagement wherever feasible, to reduce business travel.
- Support transfers to electric vehicles, to reduce the impact of both business travel, and employee commuting.
- Flexible working from home for our staff to reduce travel hours, congestion and stress.



Niche Health & Social Care Consulting Ltd is a company registered in England and Wales with company number 08133492.



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