

**HEE Anaesthetics Recruitment
Significant Incident
Final Report
December 2021**

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Anaesthetics Recruitment Significant Incident Final Report – November 2021

Executive Summary

During the review process five main themes were identified as contributing to the incident and these are outlined below. The Review Team recommend the themes are considered in much broader terms than the specific incident in West Midlands. The findings and recommendations have implications for all HEE recruitment teams and the opportunity for shared learning should be taken forward by MDRS.

The Review Team concluded that this was a **series of systems failures** rather than individual errors:

Workload

- The team was under considerable work and time pressure because of the workload placed on it immediately before a half-term week, a period in which team members would predictably and reasonably wish to take leave.

Quality assurance

- The systems (for example Oriel and Qpercom scoring system) with which the team members work are not integrated, so they are forced to manipulate considerable amounts of data in order to transcribe between systems, and this was inevitably associated with errors.
- The quality assurance processes did not identify errors and the Review Team felt these were inadequate. There appears to have been no guidelines that detailed exactly how the quality assurance processes should have been conducted. There was no logbook that recorded the quality assurance processes.
- Although the V-lookup process is considered to be more effective in minimising errors than manual systems and is “recommended”, some team members were not confident in its use.
- The team members’ ability to use the recommended systems was not recently assessed and refresh training was not given to team members whose knowledge of the systems was not adequate.
- There is no national system for sharing issues identified by the quality assurance processes across recruitment teams.
- Working from home increased the chance of errors occurring because team members could not readily check data with nearby fellow team members. The Review Team note that HEE/ANRO are far from alone in experiencing system failures exposed by moving to on-line/virtual systems.

MSRA Scoring

- Team members were not trained in the acquisition of the complete set of MSRA scores nor on any aspects of the MSRA process.

IT Technical Issues

- There was a serious issue with the messaging functionality within the Oriel recruitment system which HiCom initially were unable to confirm was a system fault. It was only when a similar event occurred in a different location at a later date that the cause was identified and changes to the system implemented to prevent a similar issue in the future.

Training

- Team members did not escalate concerns to team leadership. This may have resulted from a lack of clarity about how and in what circumstances escalation was necessary.
- Although recruitment processes have always involved the communication of emotive information, there was no set of “scripts” that allowed the team to communicate sensitively, nor had the team received training in this area.
- Team development and training with regards to leading and working in virtual environments was not undertaken.
- Training on MSRA processes was not undertaken.

In conclusion, lack of Standard Operating Procedures underpins the systems failures.

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Main Report

1. Introduction

1.1 As a result of several serious issues that impacted on Anaesthetic recruitment in Autumn 2021 HEE commissioned a significant incident review. HEE requested that the review team include experts from the HEE MDRS Team, independent senior medical educator (Associate Dean, AD), National Recruitment Manager from the Anaesthetics National Recruitment Office (ANRO) and if possible, a senior, independent expert in Human Resourcing. The Royal College of Anaesthetists (RCoA) also provided a senior representative and an experienced/senior trainee with relevant knowledge and experience of recruitment processes to complete the panel. A Senior Business Manager, HEE Midlands took on the role of Case Manager.

Terms of Reference (ToRs) were developed with input from key stakeholders including Lead Dean for MDRS, Midlands Regional Postgraduate Dean, HEE National Programme Lead, and the RCoA and these can be found at Appendix A.

1.2 The concerns outlined in the ToRs which the Review Group were asked to consider are:

1. Incorrect scores entered for some ST3 Anaesthetics candidates
 - Issue was raised by candidate who contacted ANRO indicating that their score was incorrect
 - Issue impacted adversely on 10 candidates who had received an offer initially, but offer was subsequently withdrawn
2. CT1 issue – MSRA scores
 - Incorrect scores entered for some candidates
 - Score changes resulted in detriment to only one candidate. Concerns around why only one candidate appeared affected and the potential for wider impact on more candidates
3. Communications error occurred when using Oriel recruitment system to communicate with the 10 x ST3 candidates impacted by the original scoring issue
 - An additional 16 candidates received an erroneous email in addition to the original 10
 - Issue raised by candidates and Oriel software team (Hicom)
4. Concerns raised by HEE Executive regarding method of communicating sensitive information to potentially distressed candidates. Broader concerns regarding style and content of communications to both internal and external stakeholders

2. Methodology

2.1 The following methodology was adopted for the review:

- a) Terms of Reference (ToRs) were developed with input from key stakeholders.
- b) The Case Manager and National Recruitment Manager met with the ANRO team on Tue 02 Nov which was soon after the incidents to undertake an initial discussion to:

- a. identify whether there were any immediate actions required to prevent further incidents
 - b. gather intelligence from the team on processes followed and possible causes for this issue
 - c. provide support to the team during a challenging time
- c) A meeting of the Review Group was arranged for Thursday 18 November, and this took place via Teams.
 - d) Information and relevant documents were shared with the Review Group.
 - e) ANRO Team worked with National Recruitment Lead and contributed to the development of the timeline and identification of relevant information to support the review.
 - f) HEE MDRS Team liaised with colleagues at HiCom who provide and support the Oriel Recruitment system to investigate the issue related to the Oriel communication function.
 - g) A meeting was arranged on 25 Nov with one of the Review Group who was not available on Thu 18 November. Again, this meeting was via Teams.
 - h) Several HR Directors were contacted and invited to be part of the review. However, none were available at short notice.

2.2 Information made available to the Review Team:

- Agenda for 18 Nov Review Team Meeting (Appendix C)
- Terms of Reference (Appendix A)
- Timeline (Appendix B)
- Notes from meeting with ANRO Team on 02 Nov (Review Anaesthetics Recruitment Autumn 2021 v5) (Appendix E)
- PowerPoint from meeting with ANRO Team on 02 Nov (National recruitment issues initial review)(Appendix D)
- Medical Specialty Recruitment Handbook 2021 – Recruiter Version (not included in the appendices)
- Oriel offers checklist (Appendix H)
- Audit information from Hicom re system performance
- Selection of email content (communication examples.docx at Appendix K)

2.3 The Review Team were asked to review the information prior to the meeting on 18 November and provide feedback to the Case Manager. One of the Review Team (Associate Dean (AD)) as unable to attend the meeting on 18 November and provided written feedback which was considered by the Group on 18 November. A subsequent meeting was held with AD, Case Manager and National Recruitment Lead on 25 November 2021.

2.4 A timeline was developed to support an understanding of the chronology of events (Appendix B)

2.5 ANRO Team

The ANRO Team is in the West Midlands in the Birmingham office and the current staffing is:

- 1 x Band 6
- 1 x Band 5
- 1 x Band 4
- 1 x Band 4

3. Outcomes from significant incident review

The outcomes from the significant incident review are detailed in this section and are considered within the scope of the Terms of Reference, relate directly to the concerns and are referenced as appropriate. Each of the four areas of concern will be considered separately. However, it is recognised that there may be cross-over on some occasions.

3.1 Incorrect scores entered for some ST3 Anaesthetics applicants

3.1.1 Description of issue

Late morning on 25 October 2021 a candidate applying for a training post at ST3 level in Anaesthetics contacted the ANRO as the candidate had received notification through the electronic recruitment system (Oriol) that they were 'unappointable'. The candidate queried the interview scores as they did not believe that they were correct and asked for the scores to be re-checked.

The ANRO Team checked the candidate scores and confirmed there was an issue with the interview scores. The ANRO Team escalated their concerns to senior colleagues in the WM Recruitment office and a meeting was arranged with colleagues in the HEE MDRS Team, HiCom and the National Programmes Lead to discuss the scale of the issue, the implications for the candidates and options for next steps.

Further investigations by the ANRO Team at the same time traced the issue to 24 candidates who had applied in the Wales Region. Although the issue was traced to the scores for the 24 candidates from the Wales Region the full extent and the impact on the overall cohort of candidates (numbering circa 400) required further investigation. The decision was taken by National Programmes Lead to close the Oriol recruitment system for all ST3 anaesthetics candidates at 1245 on 25 October until more information was available.

The National Programmes Lead contacted colleagues in the RCoA and alerted them to the issue, and that Oriol was currently closed to ST3 Anaesthetics candidates.

Early afternoon of 25 October the Team Leader reviewed and recalculated all the ST3 Anaesthetics candidates scores. The outcome of the recalculated scores is below:

- 10 candidates received an offer that hadn't previously
- 10 candidates who had offers had them rescinded
- 15 others were impacted:
 - 3 received a better offer (given a higher preferred offer)
 - 12 received a lower preference offer

A meeting took place late afternoon on 25 October between ANRO and MDRS colleagues to discuss and agree next step including communications to stakeholders and an update for colleagues at the RCoA.

Oriel was opened to ST3 Anaesthetics candidates late afternoon on 25 October when the scores had been correctly entered and the offers updated. Communications were sent via Oriel to all affected candidates who were advised that Oriel updates were visible, and all offers now available. This communication did not include the actual scores, they were visible a few days later.

3.1.2 Incident Review Meeting with ANRO Team

On Tue 02 November the Case Manager and National Recruitment Lead (WM) met with the ANRO team in Birmingham to review and discuss the ST3 issue, to talk through the process in detail and attempt to identify the cause(s) of the problem. Key outcomes from the meeting were to support the ANRO Team and the Team Leader and to identify learning that could be taken forward so that a similar issue didn't occur in the future. Notes from the meeting can be found at Appendix E.

Collation of scoring information

Discussing the process and actions that they took in the week leading up to the offers being released the ANRO Team were able to identify that the error had occurred in one of the many data manipulation/transposition actions.

The scoring for on-line recruitment assessments/interviews is undertaken using a software system, Qpercom (a commercial supplier). This allows the interviewers to upload the candidate scores in 'real time' during the interviews. The recruitment team (including ANRO) are then able to download/export the scores into an excel spreadsheet format. The ANRO Team download/create a separate excel spreadsheet for each recruitment region. These 'regional spreadsheets' are created individually by the members of the recruitment teams and the information may require some manual amendments to the data prior to transferring all of the information from each of the regional spreadsheets to a Master spreadsheet which is then uploaded into the Oriel recruitment system. For anaesthetics ST3 recruitment the team would need to create 8 spreadsheets – 7 regional and one Master. Both the regional and master spreadsheets are created by various individuals across the recruitment teams and can vary depending on who has created them. Discussions with recruitment colleagues identified that there are no national templated spreadsheets that contain macros and formulae already embedded within them.

However, there are fields that are 'required', and these are driven by the information required to be uploaded into Oriel.

The ANRO Team identified that the error occurred when a ranking column in the Wales Region Spreadsheet had been wrongly transferred to the Master National Spreadsheet and included erroneously as an interview score. The result of this incorrect data transfer resulted in the highest score that a candidate from the Wales Region could receive was 24 (the number of candidates who were interviewed in the Wales Region). This score of 24 (or lower) was significantly lower than a true interview value, and the applicants from Wales would have been reversed as Rank 24 would relate to a higher interview score than Rank 1. As a consequence of this all the candidates from the Wales Region did not score highly enough when all candidate scores were ranked nationally and all candidates from the Wales Region were 'unappointable'.

Quality assurance

During further conversations with the ANRO Team regarding the quality assurance processes that were undertaken by the Team it became apparent that there was no specific, detailed guidance on how to undertake quality assurance processes. Recruitment quality assurance guidelines state that 10% of all candidate scores should be reviewed for quality assurance purposes. The ANRO Team confirmed that they undertake quality assurance of 10% of each of the regional scores which is significantly higher than the recommended number. The Team highlighted the utility of using the 'V-Lookup' functionality in excel to minimise the use of the more manual 'cut and paste' function. The Team provided feedback that they did undertake quality assurance however none could confirm that the total interview scores had been checked. The two groups did significant quality assurance comparing various data fields but none of the data reviewed highlighted the error in the Wales Region candidate scores nor that none of the candidates from Wales were appointable. The issue was not identified by the Team and therefore not escalated to the Team Leader for further investigation.

3.1.3 Other considerations

Annual leave. Members of the ANRO Team were due to proceed on annual leave at close of business on Thu 21 October for the half term holiday. Handover was undertaken with Team Leader and no concerns were highlighted.

The ANRO Team reported issues with internet and syncing issues while using sharepoint and working from home. The Team also provided mixed feedback regarding working from home and whether this had impacted on opportunities to 'check-in' with colleagues with queries and concerns however small these might seem.

3.1.4 Findings

The Review Team findings are below:

- Recruitment quality assurance guidelines state that 10% of all candidate scores should be reviewed for quality assurance purposes.
- Quality assurance checklists were not being used by the ANRO Team and they team undertook a significant amount of unnecessary quality assurance; checking cell values that did not add any value to the quality assurance process and did not check the crucial overall recruitment scores. If the overall recruitment scores had been checked this should have highlighted the incorrect scores had been used for the Wales Region candidates.
- The spreadsheets being used by the ANRO Team are not national templates but are created by individuals and the use of macros, formulae and 'locked cells' is not consistent.
- The use of the 'V-lookup' function when transposing information between multiple spreadsheet/data sources is used by some members of the Team as this minimises the opportunity for errors that happen with 'manual' cut and paste functions. Not all the ANRO Team were using the 'V-lookup' function.

- The ANRO Team did not complete all the data transfers/transposition in a methodical and systematic way but undertook the work over several days which increased the opportunities for errors due to interruptions and lack of continuity.
- Annual leave may have contributed to this issue as 50% of the ANRO Team were due to go on leave on 21 October and this reduced the time that they had for all the actions required to ensure that the data uploaded to Oriol was correct.

3.1.5 Recommendations

The Incident Review Group make the following recommendations:

1. HEE/MDRS to explore options for API (Application Programming Interface) between Oriol and Qpercom scoring software which would no longer require staff to undertake download and import functions as this would happen electronically.
2. Quality assurance checklists are implemented for all the recruitment teams with progress reviews and supervisor sign off.
3. Other methods of quality assurance are explored including checking of all data
4. Quality assurance checklists to include identification of errors/problems/concerns detected and these should be shared across recruitment teams for learning purposes similar to clinical incident reporting systems such as Datix.
5. Explore options with MDRS for standardised spreadsheets including mandated formulae/macros/locked data cells.
6. A training needs analysis is undertaken to establish development needs of recruitment staff using excel functions and appropriate training provided.
7. Work plans are agreed and implemented with ANRO Team members to ensure that appropriate time is allocated to all work tasks to support improvements in staffing continuity particularly during times of high activity that include national annual leave periods.
8. Equipment is 'health' checked to ensure optimal functionality.

3.2 CT1 issue – MSRA scores

3.2.1 Description of issue

On Tue 26 October at just before 0700am a CT1 candidate contacted ANRO requesting feedback on their MSRA scores/scale as they felt that they were incorrect:

“I’ve noted that my scaled MSRA score is 6.1 (out of 18) and, from speaking to other candidates, it seems that they received higher scaled scores for lower MSRA marks”

Team Leader reviewed the queried CT1 scores and was unable to identify how or where the scores came from. The Team Leader was sufficiently concerned by this that they made the decision to check all the CT1 scores. This concern was raised at an MDRS meeting previously scheduled for that morning (26 Oct) to review progress with the ST3 issue.

Confirmation of the CT1 scores was requested from the Work Psychology Group (WPG) as the member of the ANRO Team who had dealt with this in the first instance was on annual leave and the Team Leader did not have access to the information.

The WPG undertake the 'scaling' of the Multi Source Recruitment Assessment (MSRA) on-line assessments scores. Candidates complete the MSRA on-line through Pearson Vue and the scores are made available to WPG who undertake scaling of the raw scores and then provide the 'scaled' scores to HEE ANRO teams who upload the scaled score spreadsheet into the Oriol recruitment system.

On 27 October the Team Leader received the copy of the MSRA scores from the WPG for further review and analysis in order to identify where the problem with the scores had originated. The review/ analysis identified two issues with the CT1 scores:

- i. 8 candidates were not provided with a score from the WPG as these candidates had not taken the most recent MSRA assessment. When the ANRO Team checked the information from the WPG against the spreadsheet that was uploaded to Oriol these 8 candidates had MSRA scores included but the ANRO Team were unable to identify where the numbers were generated from. The scores were corrected in the Oriol upload spreadsheet.
- ii. 5 candidates had the incorrect score transferred from the WPG datasheet to the Oriol upload spreadsheet. The scores were corrected in the Oriol upload spreadsheet.

Once the correct scores had been entered 13 candidates were identified as being impacted. The ANRO Lead made the corrections to the CT1 MSRA scores.

Quality assurance checks on the CT1 scores were similar to those that were undertaken for the ST3 scores and have been explained earlier in this report (section 3.1.1) and are not repeated here.

3.2.2 Incident Review Meeting with ANRO Team

At the feedback meeting with the ANRO Team on Tuesday 02 November this issue was explored and discussed at length with the team to identify the potential cause of the problem and any learning which could help prevent a similar situation in the future.

Collation of scoring information

The Team identified that the probable cause of the incorrect score entered erroneously for the 6 candidates was a result of a 'cut and paste' issue. Some of the team use the 'V-lookup' function when manipulating large amounts of data which can help minimise transcription errors. The Team confirmed that several spreadsheets were being used for the CT1 scores and rather than using the 'V-lookup' function some members were using the cut and paste function. They identified that there was a significant risk of errors using the cut and paste method given there were circa 390 candidates in the CT1 cohort.

It was also identified during the meeting that for the 8 candidates who did not have a score provided by the WPG a member of the Team had used their own methodology. This methodology included looking at candidates who had similar scores in the interview domains to those without a score and create the scores for these 8 candidates that was similar to their colleagues who had a score.

The team also fed back that they did not know how to obtain MSRA scores if they were 'blank' on the WPG spreadsheet.

All the Team provided feedback that they were unclear about the MSRA scores and specifically with regards to using a previous MSRA score and how they would access this information.

The Team Leader stated that the Team were aware of how to access previous MSRA scores.

Quality assurance

As stated previously recruitment quality assurance guidelines state that 10% of all candidate scores should be reviewed for quality assurance purposes. The Team highlighted the utility of using the 'V-Lookup' functionality in excel to minimise the use of the more manual 'cut and paste' function. The four members of the Team provided feedback that they did undertake quality assurance and again checklists were not being used.

3.2.3 Other considerations

MSRA has been used by some specialties for a number of years. However, in 2020 as a result of the pandemic a number of other specialties adopted the MSRA as part of the interview process and the implementation of 'covid safe' practices. Candidates only need to sit the MSRA once regardless of how many of the participating specialties they apply to. Scores are transferrable within recruitment year, even if an applicant applies to a different specialty in the next recruitment round

As mentioned previously (3.1.1) members of the ANRO Team were due to proceed on annual leave at close of business on Thu 21 October for the half term holiday.

The ANRO Team reported issues with internet and syncing issues while using sharepoint and working from home. The Team also provided mixed feedback regarding working from home and whether this had impacted on opportunities to 'check-in' with colleagues with queries and concerns however small these might seem.

3.2.4 Findings

The Review Team findings are below:

- The spreadsheet provided by WPG did not contain all scaled scores for all candidates. The scores for candidates who had **not** sat the most recent MSRA were not included in the spreadsheet for WPG. For candidates who have taken the MSRA previously they can opt to have a previous MSRA scores considered in a different recruitment round and for a different specialty.
- The use of the 'V-lookup' function when transposing information between multiple spreadsheet/data sources is used by some of the Team as this minimises the opportunity for errors that happen with 'manual' cut and paste functions. Not all the ANRO Team were using the 'V-lookup' function as they provided feedback that they were not all confident using it.
- The ANRO Team were unclear, and in fact did not know, how to obtain or access MSRA scores if they weren't provided by the WPG.
- The ANRO Team did not understand the MSRA processes, and this lack of understanding hampered the identification of when to escalate and seek advice.

- The scores that were 'created' by the team using their own methodology were 'not sufficiently outside normal tolerances' to be highlighted by a quality assurance process and therefore not identified as being 'outliers' requiring further investigation.

3.2.5 Recommendations

The Incident Review Team make the following recommendations:

1. Explore whether WPG complete all scores in spreadsheets including those from previous MSRA diets prior to release to the recruitment teams.
2. Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
3. ANRO Team are provided with written guidance on MSRA processes including the role of the WPG and how to access relevant information.
4. ANRO Team are provided with clear guidance on escalation when they encounter a problem or are unsure how to deal with an issue.
5. Explore further the comments by the ANRO Team regarding working from home. Consideration given to attending the office as a group during times of peak recruitment activity and methods of recreating how informal interactions might be supported in an virtual environment.
6. Consideration given to automated interface between WPG and Oriel to obviate the need for manual data transfer.

3.3 Communication error occurred when using Oriel system

3.3.1 Description of issue

On 27 October the Team Leader, following accepted process, notified the 10 candidates (ST3) that were impacted by the scoring issue described in section 3.1 of this report, via Oriel. This message confirmed that there had been an administration error and whilst the offer of a post should have been withdrawn under normal circumstances HEE had taken the decision to honour the offer of a post due to this error.

The Team Leader experienced problems with Oriel Messaging functionality and was unable to transmit the message to the candidates. The Team Leader switched browsers from Google Chrome to Firefox which appeared to resolve the transmission issue and the communication to the candidates appeared to send successfully. (Note: information from HiCom indicates that the browser issue is not linked to the technical problem with the software)

On the morning of 28 October, the ANRO Team received emails from candidates stating that they had received emails/communications via Oriel, and they had been offered a post. On checking these queries, the ANRO Team quickly identified that some candidates who had received the communication should not have as they were not one of the cohorts of 10 candidates (ST3) that were impacted by the original scoring issue (Section 3.1). This issue was escalated by the ANRO Team to MDRS colleagues. The MDRS Team notified Hicom (Oriel software provider) of the issue. HiCom identified that the Oriel communication has been sent to the original 10 candidates impacted by the scoring issue **and** an additional 16 – so a total of 26 candidates in total received the communication. Hicom were tasked with running a system audit (Appendix J) to identify the root of the issue.

The Team Leader confirmed that they were certain the communication had only been sent to the correct 10 candidates and that only those 10 candidates had been selected in the Oriel

electronic messaging system. They were clear that 26 candidates had not been selected and that in their opinion the issue was a system issue.

At a meeting first thing on 29 October including ANRO, MDRS Team, National Recruitment Lead and HEE National Programme Lead discussions took place to review the significant electronic activity overnight on email and social media sites relating to the issue. The decision was taken to suspend all communication from ANRO until the situation was clearer and senior managers/communication team were to approve any further communications. It was also decided at this meeting that an additional 16 posts should be found for these additional candidates.

Late morning on 29 October it was agreed that two senior recruitment managers from the Midlands would advise affected candidates by telephone, that day, that they would have an offer and an indication of where that would be located based on their previous preferences.

A further meeting was held mid-afternoon on 29 October with MDRS and National Recruitment Managers to review feedback from telephone calls with candidates. Once this was completed offers were activated through the Oriel recruitment system for the additional 16 candidates.

3.3.2 Other considerations

It is worth noting that there were potentially unintended consequences for a number of candidates than might initially seem. The 16 candidates who were offered a post when the communication went out to them in error via Oriel messaging system had scored lower than a significant number of higher ranked candidates who may have been due an offer of a training post ahead of these candidates¹.

On Thu 18 November Recruitment Team colleagues based in the East Midlands (EM) HEE office reported an issue with the messaging functionality within Oriel for a completely separate cohort of candidates from a different specialty and grade that those affected in the WM.

The EM Team sent a communication via Oriel to 10 candidates and the message was delivered to more than the 10 individuals. Again, it was highlighted that the staff sending the communication were very experienced and competent users.

HEE Recruitment Managers felt that the issue appeared similar to that experienced in the West Midlands (WM) office on 27 October and involved a similar number of candidates (10 in total).

The MDRS Team reported this second, apparently linked, issue to HiCom who undertook a second audit of the system and produced an updated report which can be found at (Appendix K)

3.3.3 Findings

- The Team Leader followed accepted process regarding communication with candidates via the Oriel messaging function.
- The Team Leader is experienced and highly competent and was clear that they only selected the correct 10 candidates when sending the communications.

¹ Will be dependent on application preferences, withdrawals and whether they had applied to other training programmes.

- The initial audit conducted by Hicom into the messaging issue in the WM office on 27 October concluded that there were no system issues that would have impacted on the messaging functionality within Oriel on that day.
- A similar issue to the WM one on 27 October was identified in the EM on 18 November and when this was investigated by HiCom they identified that there was an issue with the messaging functionality and that it had happened on both occasions (W and E Midlands) when the user had selected 10 records. Hicom were able to recreate the error and have changes to the recruitment system have been completed to prevent any future occurrence.
- The decision to contact impacted candidates via telephone in the first instance rather than via email was welcomed by the Review Team and received positive feedback from the candidates.
- Hicom have implemented a change already to prevent the same issue from occurring and further changes to increase quality assurance in this area are to be deployed on 5 January
- HEE MDRS Team monitor system issues regularly so that we can spot trends and explore recurrent or linked issues. We also meet fortnightly with the Oriel BAU group (made up of staff group leads) and weekly with ROG (made up of operational recruiters) to discuss issues or concerns

3.3.4 Recommendations

The Incident Review Team make the following recommendations:

1. HiCom review the findings of their second system/functionality audit and make the required changes to the Oriel messaging system to prevent any similar events in the future
2. Details of the communication issue and the outcome of the HiCom audit are circulated to other recruitment teams as shared learning.
3. Similar communications in the future when very sensitive messages need to be communicated should be reviewed by a second person and preferably a supervisor or manager prior to transmission. It should be noted that this would not have prevented the communication being sent to the incorrect individuals as this was confirmed by HiCom as a system error.
4. Development of the ANRO Team including ways of working including escalation and seeking support from supervisors/managers

3.4 Style of communication and approach when communicating sensitive information to potentially upset and distressed candidates.

3.4.1 Description of issue

Feedback to HEE Senior Managers from stakeholders and HEE Executive Team outlined concerns regarding the style of communication and the approach adopted during the management and resolution of the issues outlined earlier in this report.

It was felt that email communication is not the best way to deliver sensitive and upsetting information. That is lacks humanity and does not provide a person-centred approach.

3.4.2 Incident review meeting with ANRO Team

During discussions regarding the style and approach to candidate communication at the meeting with ANRO Team on 02 November the Team raised some interesting points. The ANRO Team had read some of the communications on social media and stated that some of the comments had been taken (cut and paste) from email communications that had been sent to candidates by the Team. This caused the team some anxiety with regards to being quoted out of context. The Team also discussed feedback regarding the use of the 'impersonal' ANRO signature block rather than a personal email address. The ANRO Team did not feel that they had the skills or experience to undertake telephone calls with potentially distressed and upset candidates. They also expressed concerns with regards to using their personal email addresses to respond to candidate queries and whether they might find themselves mentioned on social media in the future.

- The ANRO Team offered alternative methods of communication including telephone and recognised that this was a more personal approach. However, most of the Team did not feel that they had the experience or skills to deal with potentially sensitive and challenging conversations. They identified that they had not had any training in this area.

3.4.3 Findings

- The lack of a personal approach was identified by HEE Senior Managers during the incident and the decision was taken to change the approach and telephone the candidates that were impacted by the erroneous communication in the first instance and then follow this up with a more formal email. A script for the telephone calls was developed (Appendix G) so that there was consistency of messaging for all candidates.
- The telephone calls were undertaken by experienced HEE Senior Recruitment Managers and feedback provided by them to senior colleagues at HEE.
- Feedback from the individuals who undertook these calls shows that verbal communication is well received by the candidates.
- The ANRO Team have not undergone any training in managing challenging conversations or delivering

3.4.4 Recommendations

The Incident Review Team make the following recommendations:

1. MDRS to explore options for media/communication training for recruitment teams
2. Development of a communications policy for managing future issues
3. Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

4. Summary

The Review Group were asked to identify whether there were any immediate actions required and we can confirm that none were identified as high risk.

There were some immediate actions that were taken by HEE Senior Managers and RCoA colleagues and this was during the management of the issues as they were emerging including:

- Reviewing approach to communication with candidates

- Implementation of quality assurance checklist across recruitment teams
- Meeting with ANRO Team to discuss recent events

The Review Group are confident that with the implementation of the recommendations outlined in section 3 above that this will mitigate similar events occurring in the future.

5. Recommendations

HEE will develop an action plan based on the recommendations in this review report and provide an update and progress on their implementation within three months of the date of this report.

**Anaesthetics Significant Incident
Review Team
December 2021**

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Please click on the attachments panel  to access the appendices.

Appendix A – Terms of reference



Appendix A - Terms of Reference - Significant

Appendix B – Timeline



Appendix B - Timeline - Significant

Appendix C – Agenda review meeting



Appendix C - Agenda - Significant Incident I

Appendix D –P/P from meeting with ANRO team 02 Nov



Appendix D - National Recruitment

Appendix E – Notes from meeting with ANRO team



Appendix E - Review Anaesthetics Recruitn

Appendix F – Examples of communications from ANRO



Appendix F - Communication exam

Appendix G – HEE telephone script



Appendix G - Telephone script_Red

Appendix H – Oriel offers checklist



Appendix H - Oriel Offers Checklist.docx

Appendix I – Email from candidate notifying ANRO of possible error



Appendix I - CT1 Email 3 - Oriel email €

Appendix K – Communications to interview candidates



Appendix K_Redacted_Redacted



**Appendix L – MSRA
Scores Errors (1)_Red**

Appendix L – MSRA incorrect scores (CT1) – screenshot



**Appendix
M_Redacted_Redacted**

**Appendix M – Email from case manager to review team
outlining approach and relevant documents**

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