



# Education & Training Report 2024/25



SONIC HEALTHCARE  
UK

# Contents

INTRODUCTION	PAGE 3
PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIOS	PAGE 4
TRAINING INVESTMENT	PAGE 4
MEDICAL TRAINING	PAGE 5
STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS	PAGE 6
APPRENTICESHIPS	PAGE 7
SONIC TRAINING ACADEMY	PAGES 8 - 9
STAFF ONBOARDING	PAGE 10
SONIC LEARN	PAGE 11
NEW TRAINING CONTENT	PAGES 12 - 13
FUTURE PLANNING	PAGE 14
NOTES	PAGE 15



# Introduction

As we reflect on the 2024-25 financial year, it is with great pride that I present this Education Report, capturing the progress, challenges, and transformative initiatives that have shaped our learning and development landscape. This year has been marked by a renewed commitment to fostering inclusive, future-ready learning environments, empowering both educators and learners to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Through strategic investment in professional development, digital innovation, and collaborative practice, we have continued to build a culture of continuous improvement and curiosity. The insights and outcomes shared in this report are a testament to the dedication of our teams, the resilience of our learners, and the shared vision that drives our educational mission forward.

The Educational and Training Faculty membership is:

- **Dr Rachael Liebmann**  
Chief Medical Officer (Chair)
- **Wendy Leversuch**  
Head of Learning & Development
- **Tim Herriman**  
Group Laboratory Director
- **Dr Keith Gomez**  
Head of Medical Training
- **Matthew Gibbins**  
Director of Human Resources
- **Gill Swain-Coad**  
Learning & Development Co-ordinator
- **Beverley Wallace**  
Staff Side Representative  
(nominated from our trade union partners)

I invite you to explore the highlights, data, and stories within this report, and to join us in celebrating the achievements of the past year while looking ahead to the opportunities that lie ahead of us.

**Wendy Leversuch**  
Head of Learning & Development

# Professional Portfolios

Professional training qualifications are vital to developing a highly skilled workforce. We encourage our staff to undertake widely recognised professional qualifications such as the IBMS portfolios which fit into a range of roles and career progression. Over the course of our last year, we have supported the following:

## Biomedical Scientist Training Portfolios


### Pre-Registration

Number of IBMS Registration Portfolios supported | **121**


### Post-Registration


BBTS Specialist Certificate supported | **7**

IBMS Specialist Diplomas supported (*breakdown below*) | **64**

 Biochemistry | **12**


 Haematology & Hospital Transfusion Practice | **12**

 Blood Sciences | **10**

 Immunology | **1**

 Virology | **3**

 Cellular Pathology / Cytology | **10**


 Microbiology | **16**


## Laboratory Support Staff Portfolios

✓ IBMS Certificate of Achievement | **13**

## Clinical Scientist Training

We have staff working through Clinical Scientist training positions in both the ACS Portfolios and the STP.

 ACS Portfolio in Genetics | **9**

 STP in Biochemistry | **2**

 STP in Infection Sciences | **3**

# Training Investment

We have a dedicated training budget, available to support staff in their current and future roles. Sonic Healthcare UK group consists of multiple separate groups:

### HSL (Health Services Laboratories)

a partnership with UCLH and the Royal Free providing services to UCLH, the Royal Free, North Middlesex University, Barnet & Chase Farm NHS Hospitals and now Herts & West Essex sites.

### Labex

which provides pathology services to London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust covering Northwick Park, Ealing and Central Middlesex Hospitals.

### TDL (The Doctors Laboratory)

provide pathology services for a range of private hospitals including BUPA, Circle (formerly BMI), Ramsey and HJE hospitals in addition to many private clinics.

Over the course of our financial year 2024-25 we committed approximately **£904,100** in supporting staff training and development. This represents an increase of almost **£400,000** to support ongoing staff development and career progression compared to the prior year.

Investment can broadly be broken down into categories ranging across:

- Development of our Learning Management System (Sonic Learn)
- Academic courses, typically MSc to develop new Senior Biomedical Scientists
- Apprenticeships
- Attendance at off-site events such as conferences and user groups meetings
- Development of bespoke in-house training events with third parties
- Professional qualifications such as IBMS portfolios and Certificates of Expert Practice

Category Breakdown	
LMS	£63,639.60
University Course	£68,892.00
Professional Qualification	£41,957.55
Room Hire	£12,959.37
Conference / Meetings	£24,569.13
Post registration	£4,039.00
Pre-registration	£20,279.27
User Group	£5,873.90
L&D Departmental Costs	£411,764.40
Apprenticeships	£250,123.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>£904,098.14</b>

# Medical Training

In the past all women who had responded to the call to attend a Cervical Cytology screening appointment had their samples investigated by Cervical Cytological examination as the primary screening test. Also, in the past, all Consultants in Histopathology had at least 4 years of training in Cervical Cytology delivered mainly by 'apprenticeship' screening of Cervical Cytology cases and the use of double- or multi-headed microscopy training sessions. Before being eligible for Consultant appointments they had to have passed the FRCPath Pt 2 (or equivalent). This examination included a section specifically designed to test their ability to screen cervical cytology slides and to provide a Cervical Cytology report with advice on patient management.

In later years the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) introduced a new curriculum meaning that Cervical Cytology was a compulsory subject only for the first two years of Histopathology training and a new optional examination was introduced called the Certificate in Higher Cervical Cytopathology Training (CHCCT). The RCPATH intended this new cervical cytopathology examination for candidates wishing to carry on and pursue higher training in Cervical Cytopathology with a view to being qualified to undertake cervical cytology reporting in a future Consultant position.

A further change followed the anticipated reduction in Cervical Cytology workload with primary HPV testing (Cervical Cytology screening only of those cases which had tested positive) and extension of the HPV vaccination programme to boys as well as girls. A new curriculum was introduced by the RCPATH in 2015 with the agreement of the GMC. The College announced that training in Cervical Cytology could be delivered via formal courses / training days, teaching sets of glass slide or digital images and e-learning packages. In other words, the need for any 'apprenticeship' screening of Cervical Cytology cases and the use of double- or multi-headed microscopy training sessions was no longer necessary.

In Cervical Screening London we took a very different view. Blessed with an abundance of teaching material due to CSL being the largest screening laboratory in England, and with very close working relationships with the London Regional Cytology Training Centre (LRCTC), CSL has continued its award-winning tradition which includes in depth morphology review sessions at the LRCTC as well as 'apprenticeship' training on "live cases" on site at the Halo building. This training is delivered by a team of dedicated Consultant Biomedical Scientists and visiting medical Consultants and has been hugely successful. So successful that from September 2025 CSL is offering training to 24 resident doctors including a significant tranche who have chosen voluntarily to continue their cervical cytology education.

Following three years of this training, trainees will sit the CHCCT exam at The Royal College of Pathologists. Currently 3 CSL- trained doctors have been successful with this exam and two have come on-board with CSL.

We very much look forward to welcoming Consultants in the future who have experienced bespoke training with CSL ensuring the future of the service in London.



Dr Rachael Liebmann OBE  
Chief Medical Officer

“From September 2025 CSL is offering training to 24 resident doctors including a significant tranche who have chosen voluntarily to continue their cervical cytology education.”

# Staff Achievements & Career Development

## GIRFT - Celebrating Excellence in Continuous Improvement

Sonic Healthcare UK continues to embrace the NHS England 'Getting it Right First time' (GIRFT) programme which is designed to improve the treatment and care of patients through in-depth review of services, benchmarking, and presenting a data-driven evidence base to support change.

Our staff are encouraged to consider ways we can improve whilst completing their day-to-day duties. We run a regular awards scheme to recognise initiatives that have gone on to be implemented within the organisation - with a total of 16 awards handed out to date.



Gita receiving her award from CEO David Byrne

### GIRFT Winner (Spring 2025)

**Gita Devi-Harrison | Biomedical Scientist - 60 Whitfield Street**

The latest winner of the Get It Right First Time recognition award is Gita Devi-Harrison from the Histopathology laboratory at 60 Whitfield Street. The laboratory instigated a change where block QC is performed earlier in the process, in microtomy, thus increasing the importance of getting microtomy right first time.

Microtomy is a technique used in laboratories to cut extremely thin slices of tissue, essential for microscopic examination and accurate diagnosis. It involves using a microtome, a precise instrument that ensures sections are typically just a few micrometres thick. The microtomy laboratory at 60WS is very large, with 27 microtomy stations and two block check stations.

Traditionally, laboratory staff would choose their own workstation which presented an issue for our junior Biomedical Scientist, Trainee Biomedical Scientist and Associate Practitioner staff groups, as they were without focused training and support.

Gita instigated a dedicated training area which allowed these staff groups to work together and receive focused training that she delivers. This has resulted in enhanced specimen triage and increases in staff productivity.

#### Feedback from Trainees

"Listens and understands. Very organised and makes sure everything is covered".

"As a new trainee in microtomy, Gita was excellent for direct teaching. Once I gained skills, she then gave me the space to grow and develop. Gita leads by example and providing feedback".

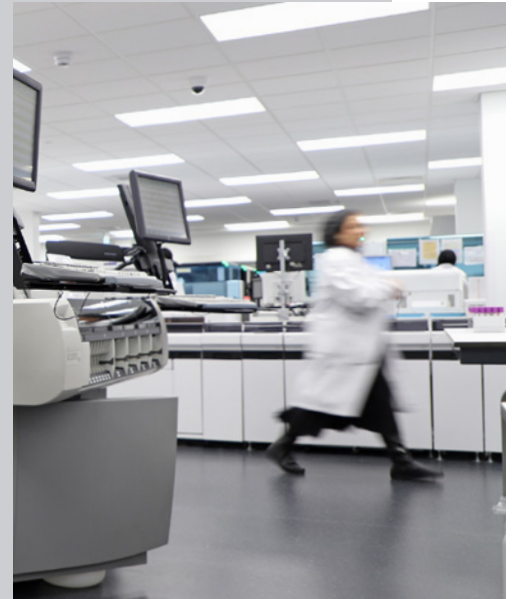
"Gita is excellent at teaching the theory around each specimen type, she explains the process of how training will occur. She reviewed my slides with me both as unstained and stained slides. Having a dedicated area and trainer in microtomy helped a lot".

# Apprenticeships

We are proud that we continue to support staff development through apprenticeships which provides a valuable mode of study to staff. Staff completing apprenticeships are given 20% 'off the job' training hours which enable staff to have time to learn new things and apply them to their role. During the 2024-25 year we have supported the following apprenticeships:

- BSc (hons) Applied Biomedical Science | **41**  
(refer to Sonic Training Academy for further details)
- Team Leadership | **6**
- Operational Management | **2**
- Business Administration | **1**
- Project Management | **1**
- HR Support | **1**
- Information Communication | **1**

We have found the team leadership apprenticeship to be valuable and popular with staff, providing staff with the skills and toolkit to begin their journey into taking on management responsibilities.



TDL Manchester

## Apprenticeship Case Study

**Shadiene Alvarez** | Human Resources - The Halo Building

Shadiene is part of our HR team and works as an administrator supporting all functions of HR. As part of her development and progression she chose to undertake an Human Resource Support Level 3 apprenticeship.

The HR Support Apprenticeship equips individuals with the skills to provide effective HR services across recruitment, employee relations, performance management, and HR systems. Typically lasting 18–24 months, it prepares apprentices to work in varied sectors, either within HR teams or as standalone HR contacts. Apprentices gain knowledge of employment law, HR policies, business operations, and data handling. Key skills developed include problem-solving, service delivery, relationship-building, and managing sensitive information. Professional behaviours such as integrity, adaptability, and commitment to development are also emphasised.

This apprenticeship opportunity supports career growth in HR by combining practical experience with foundational knowledge - making it ideal for those starting or developing a career in human resources.

**“The HR Support Apprenticeship gave me the confidence and practical experience to thrive in a busy HR environment. I gained real insight into employment law, recruitment, and employee relations, and felt supported every step of the way.”**



# Sonic Training Academy

**Our Sonic Training Academy continues to grow, having now completed a full second year, and now we turn our attention to the recruitment of the third student cohort.**

The Training Academy's purpose is to grow our future Biomedical Scientists, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and confidence to work independently within diagnostic pathology laboratories.

Each year the academy recruits a cohort of approximately 16 supernumerary apprentices to undertake the BSc (hons) Applied Biomedical Science degree over the course of 4 years whilst working as Trainee Biomedical Scientists across our laboratory network. In addition to the support they receive day to day from their colleagues they also attend regular workshops and practical sessions at our Training Laboratory at the Royal Free Hospital, delivered by our Training Academy team.

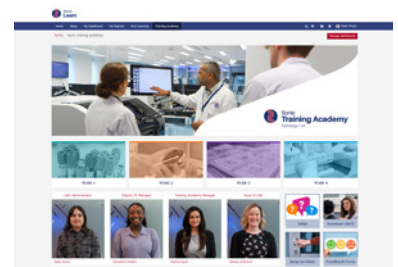
We continue to build practical sessions which fit in with the student university curriculum. In the first year we focus on introduction to basic laboratory aspects, such as quality, health and safety, pipetting skills etc. This then builds in the second year to pull into discipline specific topics across microbiology and biochemistry as well as introducing the registration portfolio.

During our second year of the academy we introduced a buddy system when our second year students were partnered with a new first year student. The aim was to give our new apprentices a friendly peer they could check in with, and gain the benefit of their experience on having lived through the first year as an apprentice themselves. This has received widely positive feedback and will now become a standard arrangement for all new academy apprentices.

## Sonic Learn Dashboard

A dashboard has been developed for all academy trainees as a central location to access all relevant information.

Trainees can book an ad hoc session with the academy team, submit anonymous feedback as well as accessing content on the various workshops the academy team deliver over the academic year.



*The newly introduced 'buddy system' has been an instant success*

## Case Studies: Our Current Apprentices



**Jay Rahman Rahi** | First Year Apprentice - Blood Sciences, Priory Hospital

*I have a great work-life balance. I chose TDL because I wanted to continue my science education after school. I attended university, but I struggled because I was taught in large classes without individual attention. The apprenticeship has helped me expand my knowledge and gain valuable support from my colleagues. TDL has changed my life, and I'm confident in my chosen field, comfortable with the company and look forward to working with them in future.*

**Deborah Ogbonna** | Second Year Apprentice - Blood Sciences, St J&E Hospital

*I decided to do an apprenticeship due to the invaluable experience of working alongside highly skilled biomedical scientists while undergoing my studies. This provides me with years and years of experience before graduation and prepares me for future career opportunities. I have enjoyed learning the specialised skills required in field and having the chance to apply my knowledge from university into the laboratory - knowing that I am contributing towards diagnostic patient care.*



**Jessica Morris** | Fourth Year Apprentice - Blood Transfusion, Royal Free Hospital

*I started the apprenticeship in 2021 and although at times it has been tough, I have gained essential knowledge and skills that I don't think that I would have enjoyed just doing the degree. Working in a lab gave me opportunities to apply what I learned in university to the workplace and it also allowed me to draw upon my colleagues knowledge and experience to aid my university work and understanding of the modules. As I am approaching the end of the apprenticeship I feel confident that I have the necessary skills to start my career as a Biomedical Scientist.*

**Sameeha Khan** | First Year Apprentice - Molecular Pathology, The Halo Building

*I decided to pursue a degree apprenticeship at Sonic to gain practical experience while earning my degree. Working alongside skilled professionals has given me valuable insights and the chance to learn from their experience within the field. The work is challenging but rewarding, and I enjoy applying what I'm studying to real-life situations. The support from my colleagues has been great, and I'm looking forward to continuing to grow in this role. Overall, it's been a rewarding decision that's helping me develop both professionally and personally.*



# Staff Onboarding

## Welcome to our HWE colleagues

In March 2025, the company became much larger as site across the HWE region joined the organisation - over 600 members of staff from across three hospital trusts. This provided an interesting challenge to the L&D team who oversee staff onboarding, who's aim was to ensure all staff received a warm welcome to Sonic Healthcare aswell as giving and receiving the necessary information to ensure a smooth transition.

Our typical onboarding process involves local onsite induction along with attendance at an online session and the completion of online modules. This program has been developed to meet the needs of individual new starters joining an established team of peers who have knowledge of the organisation policies and procedures. As whole laboratory sites would be joining the organisation together on the same day, a different approach was needed.

The core elements we wanted to achieve was to provide the opportunity for staff to ask questions whilst ensuring that the information provided to the organisation was accurate.

The L&D team designed an in person induction session with tailored information - from an introduction to the Sonic Group to establishing local issues that could be fed back to the wider team. The entire L&D team supported a busy rota which including multiple sessions across all of the sites - ultimately allowing all newly TUPE'd staff to be successfully inducted within two months of the service go-live. In total the team delivered:

- 41 x Face to face inductions in March with 509 staff fully attended and
- 8 X teams inductions (March/April with 105 fully attended.

The HR team also ensured that staff reviewed key data shared from the trust and had the opportunity to flag any discrepancies by going out to each site and meeting with individual staff in person. There are also a series of manager training sessions which up-skilled team leaders and heads of departments on the use of relevant IT systems and day to day policies which they would quickly come across. Managers were also invited to our people management workshops - a collection of courses that cover different staff policies and procedures.



BD Vacutainer training taking place at the Lister Hospital



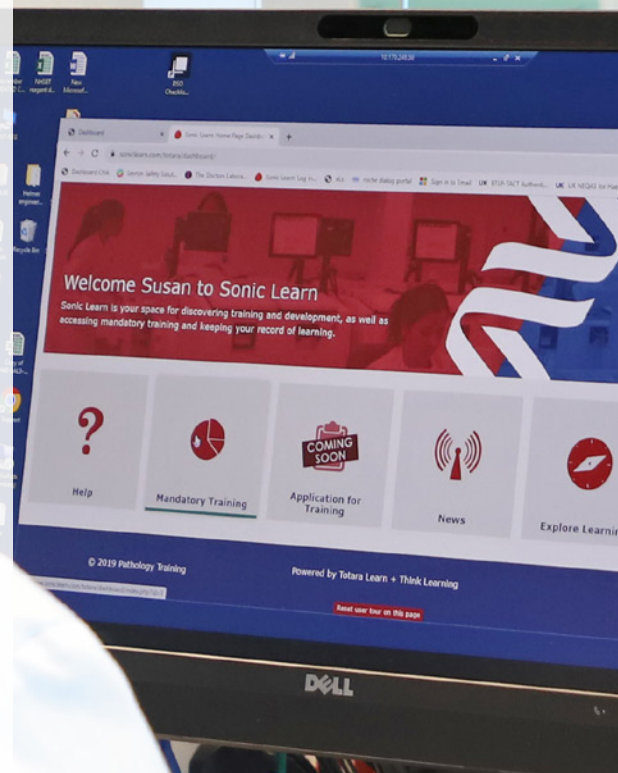
Head of L&D, Wendy Leversuch delivering an staff induction at the Princess Alexandra Hospital

# Sonic Learn

The L&D team continue to grow our offering of E-learning content and have released a range of new courses available to staff:

- Use of Safetrace TX Blood Transfusion
- Sample reception – Introduction to Infection Sciences
- Sample Reception – Introduction to Blood Transfusion
- Meeting minutes
- Risk Assessment Authoriser
- Patient Care – your role in the patient pathway
- Introduction to QPulse
- Mental Health First Aid

In Spring 2025 we undertook our first ever user survey on Sonic Learn. In addition to receiving incredibly positive feedback from our users (99% of respondents said that Sonic Learn was easy to access), we also received suggestions on how we can improve the functionality and what kind of new content staff would like to see in the future.



## OVERALL RATING:



4.26 out of 5 stars



61%

of users access Sonic Learn beyond Mandatory Training



99%

of respondents find Sonic Learn easy to access



ONLY 1%

of respondents flagged technical difficulties with Sonic Learn



## TOP 3 THEMES

Soft Skills

**95.7%\***

*\*that respondents feel Sonic Learn caters for effectively*

Management & Leadership

**94.9%\***

Mental Health & Wellbeing

**87.5%\***

## TOP 5 THEMES

requested for future development:



Lab Related Topics



IT Training



Emotional Intelligence



Mental Health & Wellbeing



Team Building

## FUTURE PLANS

L&D are developing a dashboard that brings together relevant training and guidance to support managers in their role.



**LEAST** favourite course format are text based!

91%

would ideally like a course to take under

**1 HOUR**

## COMING SOON

Improved reporting including updated records of learning for staff CPD



# New Training Content

## 12 Months of Learning

In December 2024 we launched 12 days of workplace learning. Each day for the first 12 days of December a new eLearning course was launched on the following themes:

- Effective communication
- Conflict Resolution
- Leadership
- Emotional Intelligence
- Inclusivity and Belonging
- Accessibility (Neurodiversity)
- Time Management
- Feedback
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Diversity
- Kindness and Gratitude
- Career Growth

Each course was on average 10 minutes long and remained available until end of the month. This received such positive feedback that in 2025 we launched an updated version of '12 months of workplace learning' with a new course launched each month. To date the following courses have been launched:

- Resilience
- Finance for non-finance managers
- Effective Listening skills
- Mental Health – Stress Less
- Time management
- LGBTQIA+ Inclusion



12 Months of Learning posters have been visible across a number of sites

## Corporate Skills

### Meeting Minutes

The ability to take meeting minutes is a skill that an individual is often expected to 'just have' with minimal support and training. Following requests from staff we built an e learning course that gives an overview of the types of minutes that link with types of meetings, guidance on how to approach minute taking as well as a change to practice taking minutes of a recorded meeting with both good and bad examples they can compare against.

The course has been well received with over 80% of staff who have completed the course noting that their knowledge and/or skills had been improved.

### Sonic Sessions

In July 2024 we introduced 'Sonic Sessions' an ongoing series of company-wide webinars which give staff an opportunity to find out about various projects and initiatives taking place. We opened with an overview of our new in-house built LMS 'Helix' covering its inception and implementation along with a step-by-step demonstration.

Other topics included a discussion of our business continuity plans with some shared first-hand experience of using them when one of laboratories experienced a full power failure lasting over multiple hours and a discussion on clinical trials and its impact on the future of medicine.



Laura Cronin L&D Manager (non-scientific) has led the roll out of the course

## Mental Health Training

It has been a busy year in terms of Mental health and Wellbeing focus. In April this year, a new L&D Managing Mental Health Workshop was rolled out which is beneficial to all staff and mandatory for any staff looking to become a Mental Health Advocate. This is either a facilitated face to face or via MS Teams session depending on business needs. This internal workshop replaces the Mental Health Advocate workshop previously facilitated by external trainers which means we can be proactive rather than reactive in raising awareness and supporting staff. This has already received fantastic feedback and increased our bank of Advocates across the business to 26. May 2025 saw 15 of our Advocates complete the Mental Health First Aid Program to become MHFA England accredited Mental Health First Aiders.

Our focus has been on ensuring we have Mental Health Advocates on each site with new Advocates recently joining the network from Royal Free Hospital, Watford, Lister, Mount Alvernia, Ross Hall and Chaucer. A key focus moving forward is for the network of both Advocates and MH First Aiders to further build their knowledge and confidence with a series of themed drop ins and Q&A's.

## Train the Trainer

At the end of 2024 we launched a series of Train the Trainer workshops. This comprises a total of 8 workshops covering a range of topics including:

- The role of the training officer
- Communication skills
- Competencies
- IBMS portfolios

The workshops are delivered by the L&D and Training Academy teams and are continually run and the full series can be completed in a 4-month period. Trainers can attend the workshops in any order and can book a convenient session via Sonic Learn.

Feedback has been excellent and is available to all trainers across the organisation

*"This & all sessions have been very beneficial to the Training Officer and Trainer roles."*

*"Excellent session with Laura. Clearly presented, clear learning outcomes. It felt like an open and comfortable space to share ideas, and the break-out rooms worked really well."*

*"This is a very good training session, with a clear focus on leadership skills required by all trainers and life skills. Breakout sessions are very helpful for gauging everyone's opinions and self-reviewing my skills and attributes."*

*"The course was superb, I learned so much about being a supervisor with regards to assisting our trainees and what my responsibilities will be. The delivery of the course was excellent, the course presenter was clear, welcomed questions and clarified many of our concerns and questions."*

## Sonic Connect

In November 2024 we welcomed back our colleague Virginia Re from Sonic in Australia. Sonic Connect is the global learning and development arm of Sonic Healthcare with a focus on fostering an internal appreciation of Sonic's unique culture. Medical Leadership combined with Sonic's Core Values and Federated Model collectively encapsulate what we refer to as 'The Sonic Difference'.

Many aspects of The Sonic Difference are also related to traditionally "soft" business skills that are focused on developing people and culture, and promoting a positive, cooperative and efficient work environment.

Through professional development, Sonic Connect offers a range of courses tailored specifically for Sonic Healthcare colleagues to support them in their roles

whilst acknowledging their link to the Sonic Difference. These workshops range from increasing emotional intelligence, to dealing with conflict resolution, to support in managing difficult situations when dealing with our external customers.

Over the course of two weeks approximately 490 staff attended one of 16 sessions on topics including:

- Change management
- Radical Candor
- Emotional Intelligence
- Team building – The importance of each other
- Building Resilience
- The Sonic Difference

Virginia Re talking to staff in November 2024



# Future Planning

## Sonic Connect

We look forward to welcoming back our Sonic Connect colleague Virginia Re from Australia, to deliver another series of workshops. One of the benefits of Sonic Healthcare UK is being part of the Sonic Healthcare Global family, and the ability to utilise and share knowledge with our colleagues from around the world.

## Sonic Training Academy

The Sonic Training Academy team will be expanding with full-time training officers in Biochemistry and Microbiology joining. This additional resource links in with welcoming our third cohort of students and the commencement of our first cohort with the IBMS Registration portfolio. A series of portfolio workshops are being developed to support both the apprentices and all other staff completing the portfolio.

## Mentorship

We're excited to introduce a new Mentorship Programme at Sonic Healthcare UK, designed to foster professional growth, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across our teams. This initiative will pair experienced colleagues with emerging talent, creating opportunities for meaningful guidance, skill development, and career progression. Whether individuals are looking to grow in their current role or explore new pathways, the programme will offer a supportive framework to help staff thrive.

As part of our phased rollout, we're launching a pilot scheme within selected departments to test and refine the structure, ensuring it meets the diverse needs of our people. This pilot will help us gather feedback, identify best practices, and shape the programme before expanding it across the wider business. By pairing experienced colleagues with emerging talent, we aim to create a culture of continuous learning and support that empowers individuals and strengthens our organisation.

We look forward to seeing the positive impact this will have on individuals and our wider organisation.



Automated Sciences - The Halo Building

# Notes



SONIC HEALTHCARE  
UK

All Rights Reserved | © 2025