Since its launch in 2003, NHS Jobs (www.jobs.nhs.uk) has become the UK’s leading online recruitment service. Dedicated to providing a single point of entry to NHS employment, NHS Jobs now provides every NHS trust in England and Wales with the tools needed to manage every stage of the recruitment cycle online.

This briefing provides an overview of NHS Jobs, outlines the benefits employers are reporting from their use of the service and shares details of some future developments that will ensure that NHS Jobs continues to deliver a fit-for-purpose online recruitment service for the NHS now, and in the future.

Key facts

- Every NHS trust in England and Wales is using NHS Jobs to advertise vacancies.
- NHS Jobs saves the NHS around £1 million every week in advertising spend.
- 76 per cent of employers report continued year-on-year savings that can be directly attributed to their use of NHS Jobs to manage recruitment.
- More than 80 per cent of employers believe that improving the effectiveness of their recruitment process through NHS Jobs has helped to improve patient care.
- 90 per cent of applications for employment in the NHS are now sent and received online through NHS Jobs.

Background

Each month NHS Jobs carries details of over 20,000 career opportunities in the NHS, attracts in excess of 4.5 million visits to the site and receives job applications from more than 250,000 jobseekers.

As the dedicated online recruitment site for the NHS, the service, provided by NHS Employers, has grown both in popularity and in terms of the tools and features it provides for employers.

Launched in December 2003, it was initially piloted with a small
number of trusts. By June 2005, 75 per cent of trusts were registered to use the service. In September 2006, NHS Wales subscribed and, in September 2008, the last remaining trust in England joined, securing NHS Jobs’ position as the only place to find job vacancies from every single NHS trust in England and Wales.

Research carried out with a cross-section of employers in August 2008 found that 60 per cent of employers were using NHS Jobs more than they had previously, with 50 per cent reporting that they expected their use to further increase in 2009.

Offering thousands of NHS job vacancies, all in one place, has proved attractive for jobseekers. The site records 4.5 million visits per month and boasts three million registered jobseekers, making NHS Jobs the leading online recruitment service in the UK, with consistently more visits than the commercial online job boards including Monster, Reed.co.uk and Totaljobs. This popularity has provided many employers with the incentive to move to a wholly online recruitment system.

Responding to meet NHS needs

Over the last three years, the NHS Employers NHS Jobs team has worked with trusts across England to encourage them to register, respond to their needs and support them with getting the most out of the tools and features available.

Increased international exposure for the NHS Jobs service and candidates’ ability to re-use application forms has, in some cases, created very high response rates for vacancies. In response to this, we instigated a range of pre-application questions to screen candidates, and filter questions to help recruiters sift applications for suitability at the long-listing stage. These changes provide a solid base for managing high volumes of applications to which we are now adding more sophisticated online assessment tools, the first of which is being piloted this month.

Involving employers in shaping NHS Jobs’ development and ensuring that the needs of the NHS are driving changes to the service has been critical to its success. We do this through:

- twice-yearly regional user groups organised in partnership with each of the ten strategic health authorities
- customer support services for each employer, providing tailored support and advice to ensure employers get the most out of the service
- the NHS Jobs customer council, an HR directors forum drawn from those organisations who

Major tools and features

- Links to the Electronic Staff Record join up establishment and vacancy control with recruitment activity and minimise manual data entry for new starters.
- Pre-application screening and filter questions support high volume recruitment, ensuring shortlisters only see suitable and eligible candidates’ details.
- Enhanced online shortlisting tools eliminates the recruitment cycle paper trail.
- NHS Jobs Executive provides a bespoke vacancy listing for senior management appointments.
- Links with Jobsite can be used to attract applications from an even wider pool of jobseekers.
- Regional talent pools provide details of work-ready newly qualified healthcare professionals actively looking for their first role in the NHS.
Recruitment activity has not stood still during this time. The number of vacancies advertised with NHS Jobs has increased from 45,000 in 2004 to around 200,000 in 2007/08. This is partly due to a greater number of employers using the service and a large proportion of employers moving from a paper-based to a wholly online application process, facilitated by NHS Jobs. Across the NHS in England, 90 per cent of job applications are now received online through NHS Jobs.

Benefits for employers

Research carried out in summer 2008 shows year-on-year savings across the NHS in England during the 2007/08 financial year, and an insight into how trusts are using these savings to improve patient care.

Cost savings

The value of NHS Jobs is its ability to deliver cost and efficiency savings for trusts.

An Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Gateway 5 review in 2007 set out to assess NHS Jobs’ effectiveness in delivering real benefits for the taxpayers public. The review team commended NHS Jobs, making particular reference to evidence that the service was already delivering financial benefits ten times the business case target of £24 million over five years.

Over three quarters of employers are still reporting year-on-year savings as they increase their use of the service and start to benefit from new and enhanced features such as the links with the electronic staff record (ESR) and online shortlisting. Based on figures from our research sample (representing 20 per cent of total NHS Jobs users), we estimate that over the 2007/08 financial year employers made £12.5 million in savings over and above those already recognised in the OGC report.

In line with previous research with NHS organisations, the largest area of saving continues to be from recruitment advertising, with 67 per cent of employers now choosing to use NHS Jobs as their primary source of advertising for all their vacancies.

In total, NHS Jobs has helped the NHS in England to reduce its annual recruitment advertising spend from around £120m in 2003/04 to an estimated £30m in 2007/08. Had advertising spend remained at 2003 levels, this would represent a total saving of £219m since 2003/4, equating to just over £1 million every week. This is a real cash saving which is being re-invested into patient care.

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“Over the last year we have started to advertise consultant and other medical posts, in addition to all non-medical posts.”

York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Improved efficiency

NHS Jobs’ online vacancy and application management tools have also reduced the administrative burden for recruitment departments within the NHS. Almost 90 per cent of employers who took part in the research said that the NHS Jobs service improved the efficiency of their recruitment processes, citing the reduction in paper handling and postage costs, the ability to advertise vacancies in real time, online shortlisting and links with the Electronic Staff Record as reasons.

Filling vacancies faster

NHS Jobs helps employers to speed up the recruitment process. By removing the need to meet publication schedules and automated email alerts for jobseekers, NHS Jobs improves the visibility of job vacancies, with more than eight out of ten adverts receiving applications within three days of being included in the daily ‘jobs by email’ alerts.

Online shortlisting means recruiting managers and recruiting panel members can access applications instantly, without the previous delays and costs associated with a paper-based process. Almost 60 per cent of employers reported that NHS Jobs has reduced the time it takes to recruit.

81 per cent of respondents said that greater efficiency in their recruitment processes has resulted in improvements in patient care and 82 per cent said that savings made through reductions in advertising have been used to fund direct clinical care.

“Effectively reduced time spent on recruitment admin and managers now have more time to provide patient care.”
Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust

“Using NHS Jobs has enabled us to reduce the recruiting timescale by a week and in some cases by two weeks.”
Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Improving patient care

Many employers are redirecting savings from NHS Jobs to improve frontline patient care.

“Effectively reduced time spent on recruitment admin and managers now have more time to provide patient care.”
Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust

“As part of our Cost Improvement Programme the corporate service areas have made a bigger contribution to cost savings in order to help us deliver affordable services to our patients.”
Buckinghamshire Hospital NHS Trust

NHS Jobs development plans

As part of NHS Employers’ ongoing investment in NHS Jobs, we constantly strive to meet and anticipate employers’ recruitment needs, make sure the service
keeps up to date with current recruitment trends, and search out ways to improve the recruitment experience, both for employers and candidates.

Over the next few months, NHS Jobs will be introducing some new and improved features to the online service. These have been developed in response to employers’ suggestions and have been based on our research with trusts’ HR teams, stakeholders and potential jobseekers.

Below is a short summary of our planned improvements. Further information will be available on the NHS Jobs website and in NHS Employers’ NHS Workforce Bulletin as they are released.

* **E-learning**: a new e-learning tool and training platform have been commissioned to help recruitment teams and line managers get the best out of NHS Jobs.

* **Website redesign**: a new-look NHS Jobs website, with improved navigation, better links with NHS Careers information and clearer advice and support for applicants is planned for January 2009.

* **Texting services**: employers will soon be able to text candidates with, for example, reminders about interviews or prompts to check their NHS Jobs account.

* **Application form changes**: we are updating the application form to match current legislation, including the new immigration rules, and developing a new format to help applicants and employers navigate the form more easily.

* **Improvements to candidate screening**: we will be piloting a new online assessment tool to support employers in managing high volume recruitment.

**Delivering the future for NHS recruitment**

Employers in the NHS face many recruitment challenges that have the ability to cause direct and significant impact on their capacity to care for patients. In response to this, NHS Jobs will aim, over the coming years, to strengthen its services to help employers address these challenges and make the best use of their recruitment function.

We will continue to invest in the core function of NHS Jobs as a fit-for-purpose recruitment tool for the NHS, and will expand the recruitment services it provides.

Building on our success to date, NHS Employers plans to redesign NHS Jobs to deliver a ‘next generation’ online recruitment service in 2010. Organisations will gain greater flexibility, with the option to choose from a new range of services we are currently researching with employers to provide a higher quality experience for employers and candidates.

* **The next generation of NHS Jobs**

The next generation NHS Jobs service will seek to provide:

* increased recruitment capacity and new recruitment tools
* advanced screening and routing to assist employers in getting the right candidates for the job
* automated workflow and streamlined processes to manage candidates more proactively – the best candidates don’t stay in the recruitment market very long
* more intelligent management information tools and ‘dashboards’ to support employers and the wider NHS with better quality workforce data

* improved feedback and information flow between and among employers and candidates.

We will continue to use our existing groups and forums to ensure that, as these plans develop, we are delivering the online tools and services for candidates and employers that will deliver the maximum benefit for the NHS and provide the flexibility we need to adapt quickly to new technologies and changing market conditions.

To get more involved in NHS Jobs, contact us at nhsjobs@nhsemployers.org
NHS Employers represents trusts in England on workforce issues and helps employers to ensure the NHS is a place where people want to work. The NHS workforce is at the heart of quality patient care and we believe that employers must drive the workforce agenda. We work with employers to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

NHS Employers is part of the NHS Confederation.

Contact us

For more information on how to become involved in our work, email getinvolved@nhsemployers.org

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