Streamlining recruitment with the implementation of factual references at Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust

By introducing factual references Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust has improved its recruitment process, reduced the time to hire and has forecasted financial benefits.

The case for change

The trust’s previous recruitment process involved requesting subjective references post job offer. These requests for references were managed at a local level by line managers and were responded to and sent per each request.

This process caused issues as it meant recruitment managers had to rely on references once a job offer had been made to validate their choice of appointed candidate, and were unable to govern the format of the reference information provided. Line managers were spending between 15 to 30 minutes completing each reference request and took between 6 to 10 working days to respond to these requests.

The solution

The trust adopted factual referencing into its recruitment process via the NHS Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system and by using the NHS Employers template through NHS Jobs. To gain support at a senior level, a proposal was presented to the Executive Board and Leadership Forum.

The responsibility for responding to reference requests (either via ESR or manually using factual reference template) moved centrally to HR. A drip-feed information approach was adopted with frequently Asked questions (FAQs) to communicate the change in process and the reasons why to recruiting managers.

The benefits

Migrating the referencing process to HR has enabled line managers to spend more time fulfilling their clinical duties. With HR responding to requests, the response time is now an average of two working days (previously it was 6 to 10 working days).

Reducing ‘Time to hire’ has resulted in minimising the duration and cost of using bank and agency staff as backfill. The trust has also been able to ensure the process is fully automated when used with Pre-hire Inter-Authority Transfer (IAT). By embedding a more
values-based selection method it has ensured a more robust recruitment process is followed, and the trust is less exposed to litigation.

Potential financial savings

Using feedback collated from line managers alongside data extrapolated from the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) on new starters in the East of England in 2014/2015, the trust has been able to forecast the following financial benefits due to implementing factual referencing.

The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) reported that in 2014/2015 the average band of an NHS employee was a band 6. The following calculation is based on a mid-point band 6 annual salary of £30,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An Agenda for Change band 6 staff member works a total of 1950 hours per annum (once annual leave is taken into account)</th>
<th>£30,000/1950 hours = £15.38 per hour.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each reference takes approx. 30 mins</td>
<td>Hourly rate/2 = £7.69.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall saving for implementing factual references</td>
<td>= £7.69 x number of reference requests received by the trust.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forecasted saving this financial year</td>
<td>= £4,000.</td>
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Line managers reported that it took up to 10 working days to formulate a response to a subjective reference. If this principle is applied to reference request submissions and estimate that other NHS colleagues took a similar time period to respond, the following costs can be forecast:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Agency back fill at mid-point band 6 = £207.20 per day</th>
<th>£207.20 x 10 days = £2,072 per new recruit.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response time to reference requests has reduced to 2 working days.</td>
<td>£207.20 x 2 days = £414.40 per new recruit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving a potential saving</td>
<td>(£2,072-414.40) = £1,657.60 per new recruit.</td>
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Advice to other trusts

To ensure a smooth transition for implementing factual references, the trust advises:

• Gain ‘buy-in’ from everyone involved in the recruitment process.
• Provide appropriate levels of training to recruitment managers.
• Ensure necessary roles within ESR are allocated to appropriate people.
• Begin recording Employee Relations data (if not already doing so).
• Engage all stakeholders required to support implementation, for example, HR, recruitment, payroll, ESR team.

Next steps

As part of the ongoing streamlining process and evaluation of the programme the trust is committed to undertake the following:

• Monitor the effects on its ‘Time to hire.’
• Measure which system is the most effective in terms of rates of response to requests – ESR or NHS Jobs.
• Deliver values-based recruitment training to recruiting managers.
• Transfer its Employee Relations data from centralised database to ESR.
• Promote the adoption of factual references to other trusts
• Continue to streamline the recruitment process.

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