A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO RUNNING INTERNAL AWARDS IN THE NHS
Introduction

This guide contains practical advice and information on how you can set-up and run your own internal awards scheme, to support staff engagement and retention by ensuring your staff feel valued for the important work they do every day.

The guide is divided into ten sections:
1. The strategic case for awards
2. Why you need an executive sponsor
3. Deciding on the format of your awards
4. Funding the event
5. Nominations and categories
6. How to promote the awards
7. Media handling and frequently asked questions
8. All you need to know about judges and judging
9. A suggested timetable
10. Event checklist.
Reward and recognition are important strands of employee engagement. Awards can play a key part in recognising the good work of your employees, making them feel valued for the work they do. As part of an overall strategy, awards can help drive improvement as well as increasing engagement with the organisation, its values and strategy.

A more engaged workforce has been shown to result in:

- improved patient satisfaction and outcomes – many studies have shown a link between highly engaged employees and improved customer satisfaction
- better performance and productivity
- increased happiness at work
- lower staff absenteeism and turnover, with the resulting cost savings
- a stronger performance under the Care Quality Commission’s Well-Led domain
- improved compliance with trust objectives, including staff survey participation and flu vaccination take-up.

While winning external awards is also a great way to recognise your teams, not everyone will be part of potentially award-winning initiatives.

Running your own employee recognition awards gives you a chance to create categories aligned with strategic objectives and values, as well as recognise people at all levels of the organisation.

The evidence:

- A study of 2,115 Dutch physicians showed doctors who were more engaged were less likely to make mistakes (Prins et al, 2010).
- A study of 8,597 hospital nurses found higher work engagement was linked to safer patient outcomes (Laschinger and Leiter, 2006).
- A 2016 Gallup meta-analysis of 82,000 business units in 73 countries and spanning 49 industries showed that units in the top quarter of engagement scores were 17% more productive and 21% more profitable than those in the bottom quarter.
- According to research by the King’s Fund into engagement in the NHS, ‘The quality of patient experience, as measured by inpatient satisfaction in acute trusts, is strongly linked with engagement (as it is with other aspects of staff experience)’.
- The Boorman Review (2009) found NHS staff are absent from work for an average of 10.7 days each year, losing the service a total of 10.3 million days annually and costing £1.75 billion.
- The King’s Fund report also found that an increase of one standard deviation in engagement would be equivalent (all else being equal) to a saving of around £150,000 in salary costs alone for an average acute trust.
"Running our monthly and annual awards gives us so many opportunities to talk to employees about the trust’s aims, objectives, vision and values and to make that terminology part of the wider trust language. This, in turn, meant that when the CQC came, staff were familiar with our strategy and able to articulate that to inspectors."

Jonathan Keeble, Director of Communications, Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

“It might be tempting to think of staff awards and other recognition programmes as ‘nice to haves’, particularly within the cash-strapped NHS, but the opportunity is there to build them into the heart of your employee brand and put them at the centre of your organisational DNA, as well as making them work hard for you in terms of branding, marketing and reputation.”

Louise Thompson, Director of Communications, Burton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Case study: Making awards central to strategy

South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust goes further than using awards as a strand of their communications activity, by using the awards to create a bank of resources to use throughout the year.

The comms team adds to the budget it acquires through sponsorship, to fund the photography and videos.

By filming all shortlisted entrants, they create a bank of case studies that can be used whenever needed. Photography of all of the finalists is used both at the awards ceremony and on all other collateral for the year, such as posters and in the annual report.

This approach has paid off – the CQC cited the awards as a good example of involvement, in its evaluation of whether the trust was well led.

Jude Tipper, the trust’s head of communications and involvement, says: “It allows us to have examples at our fingertips of how we are delivering our objectives. It also helps us identify our ‘comms friends’, ie the staff who might help us with information or do media interviews at short notice. Critically, we use the stories we see in the nominations to inform which external awards we enter for the year.”
Setting you up for success – why you need an executive sponsor

As with many communications or marketing initiatives, initial enthusiasm can fade unless your employee award scheme is seen as a priority. Securing sponsorship from your organisation’s senior/executive leaders provides senior-level endorsement for the scheme and ensures a level of priority and scrutiny that will make sure everyone is invested in the success of the scheme.

Securing an executive sponsor also:

- raises the profile of the awards with the board, meaning they are seen as having the most senior level of endorsement
- provides opportunities to engage with board members, some of whom you may want to ask to be judges
- generates an expectation that the awards ceremony will take place, which creates the imperative for the time to be dedicated to making it happen
- gives value to the awards from staff, reinforcing the reward element of being nominated or winning one
- supports your application for budget to do something which could be viewed as ‘nice to do’.

In addition, having general executive involvement in the awards ensures the executive team gets a sense of what’s going on at a grassroots level throughout the organisation and equips them with case studies they can use when talking about performance and improvement.

Top tips for securing a senior sponsor

- Approach someone you know to have an interest in employee engagement.
- Book a time to sit down with them, rather than just mentioning the idea in passing.
- Write a short business case to leave with them after your meeting. Use the evidence in The strategic case for awards section to help prove the impact your proposal could have. The business case should include what you plan to do, an estimate of costs and staff time, any risks and the likely benefits.
- Aim to have an open discussion. Listen to their concerns and, if possible, go away to research information which will allay them.
- Ask whether they would be happy to sponsor the initiative and support it at senior leadership team meetings.
- Explain how you would involve them in the practical arrangements. Check they are happy with what you’re thinking. They’re unlikely to have time to attend all your meetings, but it will be in your interests to keep them updated at key points so they can keep the rest of the senior leadership team up to date and on board.
- Offer to present the idea and evidence in support of it at the relevant meeting. Supply your business case to all attendees in advance of the meeting.
Deciding on the format of your awards

There are a number of options when it comes to staff awards and they can be as big or as simple as you choose to make them. The three most obvious formats are:

1. Regular awards

Research shows that recognition is more effective when done regularly – especially in the workplace. Having low-key monthly awards, nominated and perhaps voted for by colleagues and patients, is a great way to highlight best practice.

Set up a simple process using an online form on your intranet and/or nomination boxes in staff rooms and waiting rooms, with monthly certificates and an article on your intranet/newsletter to support the initiative. Staff could be encouraged to vote online where possible. Convene a judging panel with director or executive level sign off and organise a monthly presentation.

2. Regular awards linked to an annual ceremony

Having created a monthly set of awards you could roll all of the winners forward to an annual ceremony, where one overall winner is chosen. To justify an awards ceremony, you will need additional categories.

You could either form a judging panel or hold another vote to decide the overall winner, offering a prize, not just a certificate at a celebration event or ceremony.

3. A stand alone annual ceremony

A stand alone ceremony is probably the most difficult of the three to pull off. Using monthly awards spreads the workload, increases engagement and visibility and builds excitement and a sense of aspiration.

Possible reasons for holding an annual ceremony without monthly awards might be:
- lack of resource to administrate monthly awards
- the ability to outsource the task of organising the awards
- another key trust date or event that lends itself to adding in an awards event (e.g. a staff conference).

Case study: Western Sussex Hospitals

Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust runs a Star of the Month Awards scheme. Along with £50, a certificate and a letter of achievement that goes on their permanent employee record, each monthly winner also receives a ticket to the annual Patient First Star Awards evening where one previous winner will win the Employee of the Year award. No additional nominations can be made for this category. Using previous nominees cuts down on admin for this category and gives the communications team some great case studies to use in the run-up to the awards.
Funding the event

Finding and justifying the spend on an awards event will be difficult given the financial pressures the NHS is facing, but there are some easy ways to cover the capital costs of any awards ceremony.

By seeking sponsorship you can reduce the costs your organisation has to cover. Whether that’s an overall sponsor, table sponsors or just companies that provide certain elements, such as the prizes, venue or food and drink. Make a start with organisations you already have a relationship with.

Offering different levels of sponsorship will allow lots of companies to get involved.

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Case study: Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust secured sponsorship from the company which built its new entrance. It sold the opportunity as a way to prove they were investing in the people of the hospital not just bricks and mortar.

“We changed from having a sit-down, three-course dinner with a broad invitation to a drinks reception and ceremony for a more select number – shortlisted nominees and their nominator plus members of the senior leadership group.”

Sarah Goldie, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

“The people running your trust charity might be best placed to help identify potential sponsors and gather money. They’ll have the infrastructure in place and will benefit from the opportunity to further develop relationships with the local community and local businesses.

In addition to seeking sponsorship:

- Negotiate – the first quote will always be negotiable, so don’t be afraid to ask for better prices especially on venue hire, food and drinks
- Plan early so there’s time to investigate other suppliers – a venue’s preferred AV supplier might be expensive when another could do an equally good job. Having a range of quotes will allow you to negotiate with your preferred supplier
- Barter – would a local venue or AV supplier provide services in return for sponsoring an award?
- Be flexible – do you have to have a three course sit down meal, or will two courses, or even a cold buffet achieve the same? Is live entertainment really necessary, or if you want an atmosphere could a local band, choir or children’s dance group provide it?

“We changed from having a sit-down, three-course dinner with a broad invitation to a drinks reception and ceremony for a more select number – shortlisted nominees and their nominator plus members of the senior leadership group.”

Sarah Goldie, Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

Sponsorship monies not only meant we were able to host more staff at a better venue but it meant we could purchase certain elements, like wine for tables, which we would not have used hospital money to purchase.”

Sam Holden, Head of Communications, Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.
The strategic case

- Self-source – venues can produce table numbers and a seating plan but will charge you for it. These are the kind of things you can do in-house to save money. You can also download certificate templates to save on design time and costs. Microsoft Office provides some or you could try Certificate Magic.

- Exploring alternative prizes – companies may donate prizes in lieu of sponsorship and asking your senior team and board to use their contacts may reap rewards. Alternative prizes could be offering extra flexi-time hours to winners; a designated parking space for a month or inviting winners to nominate how they would like small lumps sums of money spent. For example, to replace equipment or buy new chairs for a waiting room. You may even decide prizes are unnecessary as the recognition and attendance at the event are reward enough.

Download this awards brochure that Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust created to explain sponsorship opportunities. It’s a simple three-page pdf that can be emailed to potential sponsors ahead of a conversation.

“The evening entertainment was a live band who offered to play for free. I negotiated with the venue to throw in some freebies such as football match tickets, tickets to their Christmas meal and party nights that we could offer to staff as prizes.”

Rachel Roberts, Communications and Engagement Officer, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust

“We asked our executive directors to use their own contacts to get donations for prizes. This resulted in the top winners receiving Fortnum and Masons hampers, which we would never have been able to afford.”

Sam Helden, Head of Communications, Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
As we all know, NHS staff are pushed for time, so making nominations as easy as possible will help increase take-up. Ask for the minimal amount of information, but for ease of follow-up always ask for:

- contact details for the nominator
- contact details for the nominee
- line manager
- location
- directorate/division
- a summary of why the nominee is worthy of the award
- which of the trust’s values the nomination reflects.

**Award categories**

Award categories will have the most impact in ongoing communication if they are aligned to your organisation’s vision, values and strategy. You could also consider aligning them to the five CQC domains: safe, effective, responsive, caring and well-led.

Alternatively, think about what kind of stories you want to be able to tell. Are you looking to demonstrate that your organisation is innovative? Working in partnership? Working with the community? Meeting CQUIN targets?

Here are some example categories for inspiration:

**Patient’s Champion**
For staff who embody and exceed the NHS organisation’s values.

**Mentor of the Year**
For team leaders and managers committed to the professional development of their colleagues or who are regularly using coaching techniques to develop and empower others.

**Care for the Future Award**
For staff helping to ensure the sustainability of the trust’s quality of care, services, finances, staff wellbeing, achievements or reputation, and helping it adapt to future challenges.

**Innovator of the Year**
For staff initiating or leading positive change and/or research, including new techniques, systems and partnerships.

**Extra Mile Award**
For staff exhibiting an exemplary attitude to patient care, service delivery or improvement, going above and beyond, and respecting the diverse cultures of our patients and/or colleagues.

**Team of the Year**
For a team that has triumphed in the face of adversity, or pulled together to maintain care, quality or performance in defiance of extraordinary pressures.

**Compassionate Care Award**
For staff who go beyond normal expectations to care for patients with exceptional kindness, dignity and respect.

**Award for Excellence**
For staff whose skills and actions help the trust exceed quality objectives for the continuous improvement of patient outcomes, experience, safety or staff wellbeing.

**Volunteer of the Year**
For volunteers who have made a major difference to a patient, relative, colleague or team through their community-spirited commitment to serving their local hospital.

**Hospital Hero**
For staff who are the jewel in their team, whose drive, enthusiasm or good sense of humour inspires those around them, especially at times of difficulty or stress.

**Employee of the Year**
The Employee of the Year prize is selected from those nominated for the Employee of the Month since the last awards – additional nominees cannot be accepted.

**Chairman’s Patient First Award**
For a member of staff who has made an exemplary contribution to the Patient First programme and helped develop genuine cultural change across the trust.

You could also provide some top tips for entering awards. This example is from South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
Top tips for writing your award application

**DO:**
- Give yourself plenty of time. We can all leave things to the last minute, but if you get your application written early, you’ll have plenty of time to re-edit if necessary before the closing date.
- Make sure you enter the most appropriate category. If in doubt, please ask for guidance.
- Be passionate, punchy, and positive – remember you’re not writing a report!
- Demonstrate achievements and keep your application evidence based – in other words, don’t just give an opinion, back it up with examples and, where appropriate, outcomes.
- Ask someone else to read your application, preferably someone who doesn’t have much knowledge about what it is, or who it is, you are writing about. Ask them if they understand what you have written and if they feel it demonstrates achievements well.
- Remember the judges will not have any background information on your project/team/initiative/individual and may not be familiar with clinical terminology.

**DON’T:**
- Use lots of jargon or abbreviations – it won’t help the judges understand what you’re trying to say.
- Use over-complicated language, stick to plain English.
- Ignore the word count limit. The limit is there to help you fill in the application, as well as to help the judges carry out their task efficiently and methodically. If you go over the word count in your draft, it won’t be accepted by the online form.
- Pretend a piece of work is something it’s not. If you have only thought about starting an initiative, it’s not the same thing as actually starting it. You won’t be awarded for just a good idea – wait until next year!
- Be shy. It can sometimes be hard to 'blow your own trumpet', but be proud of your achievements and aim to get recognition for them. It’s also why we have awards for individuals this year – so people can get well-deserved recognition.
- Submit separate supporting evidence for the awards, it is not required.
- Miss the deadline!

(Shared by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.)
How to promote the awards

The number of entries for an award ceremony can broadly be a barometer of success, so how do you drive engagement to ensure your awards have the prestige you want among staff? There are lots of low-cost ways to promote your awards from the initial buzz of the launch up to and after the night itself. You should utilise all of your internal and external comms channels to promote the awards, using key dates as springboards for certain activities.

Methods could include:
- posters – use online graphic design package such as Canva to create your own without design costs
- article on your intranet
- communication via team meeting cascade
- blog or video message from the Chief Executive
- staff magazine/ newsletter
- leaflets in staff rooms
- press release for local media
- roadshows with opportunities to vote there and then
- group email by division/directorate or by staffing grade. For example, to all matrons, clinical directors or chiefs of service.

You may also want to consider a way of providing ongoing recognition, for example through logoed name badges for winners or by inviting winners to become trust ambassadors. These could then become aspirational elements of the awards.

Communications opportunities

- The awards launch.
- Regular reminders – in year two this can include case studies from the previous year.
- Video from the chief executive to encourage nominations.
- Closing date for nominations.
- Announcements of new sponsors/supporters.
- Publishing the shortlist.
- Brief case studies/interviews with shortlisted staff/teams/initiatives.
- Details of the event.
- Photo spread of the event itself with quotes from winners, presenters, supporters and other attendees in your staff magazine.
- Videos of the winners talking about what they did to deserve the award – these can be spread throughout the year to keep the awards in the news.
Ideas for the run up to the awards

- Use the videos of last year’s winners as teasers on your intranet and social media channels in the run-up to the launch. Check out the ones made by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.
- Collate your videos into a playlist on YouTube so you can easily share them as a batch in future. See the example above for how this works.
- Encourage staff to share information on their personal social media account.
- Promote the awards in your staff newsletter, regular emails and through other internal comms channels. A video from your chief executive to launch the awards would work well on all these platforms.
- Ask your executive sponsor to write a blog or opinion piece about the importance of awards in showing pride and celebrating achievements. You could offer to help write it if they will front the piece.
- If you want partners and patients to nominate, vote or get involved with judging, ensure to engage them early. Using the networks of people who have good contact with them regularly, such as patient liaison or any fundraising groups linked to your trust, would be an easy way to do this.
- Posters to promote entries can be relatively simple and cheap to produce in-house. Using photos of previous winners with quotes of how they felt about winning can encourage others to want to feel the same.
- Create regular updates throughout the time that entries are open. You could use case studies of previous winners to create features about each category and release one a day/week throughout the time that people can submit their nominations.
- If you have hospital radio, how can they help to promote your awards?
- Run a prize draw for tickets to the evening for people who aren’t shortlisted. The more people who experience the sense of pride that the event inspires, the more buzz you will create.
- If you created videos about the finalists, have them edited into shorter clips to use on social media on the run-up to the event.

Ideas for the event itself

- Provide live Twitter and Facebook updates on the award winners, with photos/videos if you can. This allows people to follow, share and celebrate online.
- Create and promote a hashtag so people in the room can get involved on social media. Ensure you track it after the event to get an idea of the reach and potential impact.
- Be sure to name-check your sponsors in social media posts about the evening, as this will help provide a return on their investment by increasing publicity for them.
- Have a press release and intranet article ready to post first thing the following morning. You could even send a special email newsletter announcing the winners with a couple of choice photos dropped in. People will want to know who won, so don’t make them wait.
- Ensure your photographer can turn around pictures quickly. You’ll need a good one for your press release as a minimum, so ask for the shot of all the winners to be prioritised.
- Providing an inexpensive, printed photo of each winner on stage is a low-cost touch that will be appreciated by the winners.
Media handling FAQs

Here are some suggested responses to potential media questions to help ensure any media interest stays positive.

Q The trust is running a budget deficit, how can you justify spending on something so frivolous?
A Is the trust paying or is the money coming from sponsors or charitable funds? If the trust is paying:

There is good evidence that shows happy, engaged staff lead to improved patient satisfaction and outcomes as well as better performance and productivity, increased happiness at work and lower staff absenteeism and turnover, with the resulting cost savings. We’ve made a decision to invest in our people for the benefit of our entire workforce and the people we serve.

If the money is coming from sponsors/other funds:

We’re delighted to have the support of [EXAMPLE ORGANISATIONS] which have helped to cover the costs of the awards.

There is good evidence that shows happy, engaged staff lead to improved patient satisfaction and outcomes as well as better performance and productivity, increased happiness at work and lower staff absenteeism and turnover, with the resulting cost savings. That’s why we think the awards are important.

Q Don’t hospital staff put in enough time at work without having to give up their evenings too?
A Attending our awards event is entirely voluntary. We’re aiming to make it as attractive as possible so our people will choose to attend and use the opportunity to enjoy an evening out with good food and entertainment, while socialising with friends and colleagues.

Q What will happen if shortlisted staff are on the rota to work for the awards evening?
A We’re sure managers will try hard to make sure that those shortlisted are not due to work at the same time as the awards ceremony. The date has been booked since MONTH and was given to all finalists in good time. We’re certain colleagues will want to go along and be recognised for their achievements, so a shift swap is probably possible, if it can be agreed with the relevant line manager.

Q What benefits will the awards have? When the NHS is stretched to its limits, shouldn’t we be focusing on something with direct patient outcomes?
A When staff feel that their work is recognised and valued, they feel more engaged with their organisation. There is good evidence that shows happy, engaged staff lead to improved patient satisfaction and outcomes as well as better performance and productivity, increased happiness at work and lower staff absenteeism and turnover, with the resulting cost savings.

According to research by the King’s Fund into engagement in the NHS, “The quality of patient experience, as measured by inpatient satisfaction in acute trusts, is strongly linked with engagement [as it is with other aspects of staff experience].”
The integrity of your awards will be intrinsically linked to the quality of the judging. Here are some ideas for creating a credible and trusted judging panel and process.

- **Specify how entries will be judged when you ask for nominations.** Clarity about what a winning entry should contain will help people create better quality entries and understand if they don’t get shortlisted or aren’t a winner. It also generates trust in the process.

- **Recruit a wide range of judges and promote them.** A panel comprising not only senior people from your organisation, but some from outside will demonstrate integrity and objectivity. Secure patient and staff representatives to join the judging panel. Inviting patients to apply to sit on the panel will connect the awards to your ultimate customers. Look for people with connections to your organisation, such as patient champions, but also approach suppliers and the local business community to source high-calibre judges. You could also invite one or two previous winners to sit on the judging panel to provide a grass-roots view.

- **Be clear on what you require for an entry.** Do you just want entrants to write 500 words explaining why they/their project should win, or would you prefer to specify questions they need to answer? Linking entries to your values is a good way to reinforce how important they are.

- **Will you need a second round of judging?** Are you expecting finalists to give a presentation or submit further information before the winner is decided, or will the winner be chosen just from a written entry? Be careful to strike a balance between a robust and transparent process and one that could put people off entering as it feels like too much hard work.

- **Decide on how you will judge the entries.** A judging day is one approach, with judges all together to compare entries and reach a consensus. Independent judging of entries with scores submitted individually is the other straightforward option. This can be easier to co-ordinate as you don’t need to find a free slot in lots of people’s diaries.

- **Create guidelines for judging so you’re comparing apples with apples.** Having something completed by the judges, either as a group or individually, will evidence why decisions were made. A great way to judge entries is to assess them based on your organisation’s values. See page 16 for an example.

- **Create a document explaining what a winning entry looks like to help your judges be consistent.**

- **Set judging dates at the start of the process.** When you recruit judges you should be able to tell them the deadline for awards, when you expect to have everything ready for them to see and the date of the judging day or when you need their scores back. It’s important to get these dates programmed into diaries early as you will be likely to want senior people on the judging panel to emphasise the importance of the awards to the organisation.

- **Set up your judging so no one knows who the winner is.** This creates anticipation and ensures confidentiality. If having a judging day, facilitate roundtable discussions, but ensure that entries are scored individually, not by consensus. You’ll need to spend time collating the marks, but it allows the judges to experience the anticipation during the evening and to genuinely say to people on their table that they have no idea who the winner is.
South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS FT: Judging guidelines

These guidelines were developed by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS FT to support the judges and ensure consistency across the panel.

Confidentiality

Please keep information about the applications, scores and numbers of entries in each category confidential.

You can discuss anything with your fellow judges or the organisers but please don’t share details with anyone else. We don’t want any speculating on the winners – it could lead to disappointment!

Please return all paperwork at the end of the judging session.

Guidelines for judging

Take your time on each entry, read through it carefully - but be aware of the overall time limit for our judging process. Give each entry equal attention.

You can write on any of the paperwork or entry forms. You may find it useful to take notes or highlight important points in the entry. You may also find it helpful to start off by sorting your entries into piles - eg ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘maybe’.

Take the opportunity to discuss entries with fellow judges. Just remember, you may not all share the same opinion!

You do not need to reach a consensus with fellow judges as you will complete individual, confidential scoring sheets.

Scoring sheets will be returned to the organisers who will then add up the scores for each application, the entries with the highest scores will be the winners.

Remember:

- Do not base your decision on any other knowledge you may have of a project/service/individual. Please only base your decision on the information that has been provided on the entry form.

- Integrated teams and staff [those who work for social services] were encouraged to enter as they are very much part of the trust’s workforce, so please give their entries equal consideration to trust staff. The same goes for trust volunteers.

- If you are heavily involved with a project/service/initiative/individual that you have been asked to judge and feel that you cannot judge that category without bias, please let the organisers know as soon as possible.

- Keep asking yourself - what makes this excellent? What makes this more than just doing the day job?

- If you have any queries, please ask!
Suggested awards ceremony timetable

- **6 MONTHS BEFORE**
  - Write a business case, secure executive support and sponsorship, agree budget, aims, objectives, etc. Agree categories and judging criteria.
  - Agree date for event, book venue, secure sponsorship to fund event/donate prizes.

- **5 MONTHS BEFORE**
  - Announce awards scheme and open nominations. Book presenters, entertainment.
  - Agree format with venue, order trophies, source and agree prizes.

- **4 MONTHS BEFORE**
  - Close nominations, host judging, announce shortlist, send invitations, confirm venue details including menus. Book photographer.
  - Prepare script, presentation, music and all audio-visual materials for on the night. Agree running order, prepare presenters/host. Check RSVPs and dietary requirements, ensure winners are attending. Design and print programmes, seating charts, name cards, etc.

- **3 MONTHS BEFORE**
  - Run through with host and presenters at the venue, if possible. Engrave trophies, write press release and prepare internal article.
  - Final check of guest list, programme, running order, messaging. Get someone who hasn’t been involved to sense check your to-do list.

- **2 MONTHS BEFORE**
  - Announce awards scheme and open nominations.
  - Book presenters, entertainment.

- **1 MONTH BEFORE**
  - Close nominations, host judging, announce shortlist, send invitations, confirm venue details including menus. Book photographer.

- **2 WEEKS BEFORE**
  - Run through with host and presenters at the venue, if possible. Engrave trophies, write press release and prepare internal article.

- **1 WEEK BEFORE**
  - Final check of guest list, programme, running order, messaging. Get someone who hasn’t been involved to sense check your to-do list.
An event checklist – everything you need to have done before the event

**Event**
- Agree who’s doing what, where and when
- Book the venue
- Agree timings
- Book entertainment
- Book photographer
- Book audio-visual equipment and personnel
- Agree food and drink
- Ensure venue is printing menus for tables
- Source music for winner to walk to – different music for each finalist is a great touch. Always check copyright issues
- Agree room layout and extras (dance floor/table cloths/flowers, etc)
- Agree seating plan and running order
- Confirm dietary requirements

**Awards and nominations**
- Secure executive sponsorship and time in exec diaries for judging/attending
- Agree categories and judging criteria
- Agree prizes
- Open nominations
- Weekly communications and case studies
- Design invitations
- Close nominations
- Convene judging panel
- Book compère/host and presenters for each award
- Announce shortlist
- Invite attendees
- Develop event programme
- Create video content
- Design certificates
- Secure prizes
- Design presentation and write script
- Collate RSVPs and confirm numbers, ensure your winners or proxies are attending
- Run through with host and presenters
- Prepare promotional materials (intranet article and press release to go out the following day)
The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first.

We actively seek the views of employers on key workforce issues and use our expertise to support them to develop a sustainable workforce, improve staff experience and provide high quality care to patients. We influence workforce policy at regional, national and European levels and turn policies into practical workable solutions.

NHS Employers is part of the NHS Confederation.

Contributors to the guide

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Acknowledgements

This briefing was written by Awards Writers, part of the Wordsmiths Unlimited team. Communications managers turned content creators, the Awards Writers team delivers ‘glory through stories’ for their clients. They have had particular success helping clients get up on stage to claim trophies, with 80 per cent of the entries written since 2012 being shortlisted and around half taking home a prize.

Working for a wide variety of public and private sector clients, the team also:

- Writes websites, blogs, newsletters and brochures.
- Commissions and writes a wide range of articles.
- Advises on and creates internal and external communications strategies.

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