

FEBRUARY 2016

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOSPITALS**

### **TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR OVERSEAS QUALIFIED NURSES**

#### **The organisation**

Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust provides acute and specialist services over two sites: Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and Cheltenham General. Employing more than 8,000 members of staff, the trust serves a culturally diverse population of around 620,000 in the county and surrounding areas.

#### **Background**

Gloucestershire Hospitals has been innovative in its approach to filling nurse vacancies within the two hospitals. The recruitment team recognised that many of its healthcare assistants were actually experienced nurses who were qualified overseas. These were people who were living in the UK as dependents (on a spousal visa) or with indefinite leave to remain. This presented the trust with the opportunity to fill vacancies with experienced skilled nurses. A training programme was designed, in addition to the trust's usual recruitment methods and drives, to help this group of healthcare assistants become registered nurses in the UK.

#### **How we did it**

In early 2015, a 12-month training programme to support the identified healthcare assistants was designed to guide each candidate through:

- the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) registration, including the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE).

The trust employed a part-time IELTS tutor as this option proved to be more cost-effective than outsourcing.

Links were made with the local communities through existing employees; in particular within the Philippine, Indian and Nepalese populations in the

*"I'm grateful for  
the opportunity to  
be a nurse again"*

*- Feedback from a  
candidate on the current  
training programme*

Gloucestershire area. Existing employees were informed about the training programme through word of mouth and through local social media groups. The organisation also held recruitment open days to inform potential candidates about the training programme, the recruitment process and to provide background information about both hospitals.

During the training each healthcare assistant transitioning to the new role was fully supported.

## The training programme

There is strict criteria for applicants to satisfy registration requirements of the NMC.

They must:

- be a qualified nurse in their home country
- have completed one year of post-registration experience
- hold a 'live' nurse registration in their home country.

All successful applicants on the training programme work at band two level and complete a 12-week IELTS course one day per week. After this the education lead for overseas nursing supports them through the NMC registration process, including the OSCE exam.

## Barriers

Although the training programme has been very well received there have been some challenges along the way. These include the cost of putting candidates through external IELTS exams and the practical logistics surrounding the creation of a support system within the professional education team. These challenges were addressed by recruiting a part-time tutor for IELTS to keep the process in-house and by the education lead for overseas nursing working alongside the ward teams to plan the best way to support those on the training programme.

## Outcomes and successes

The advert for the first cohort (40 places) was advertised on NHS Jobs at the end of January 2015 and it attracted 121 applications within one week. The first wave of overseas qualified nurses are now awaiting the results of their IELTS exams and, if successful, will start their OSCE training programme.

The introduction of the training programme has been a longer-term investment for our trust and is proving to be a great way to help develop existing staff and improve staff retention levels. By investing in our local workforce, our hospitals are better reflecting the diversity of the county and our applicants are appreciative of the opportunity to be supported through the process. The introduction of the training programme has helped to build staff morale and contribute to the positive culture of our workforce.

## Next steps

In mid-February 2016, an advert for a new cohort of 40 nurses on the training programme was placed on NHS jobs for two weeks. The training programme has generated keen interest and we are anticipating a large number of applications. We are currently evaluating the current training programme and are also hoping to expand it in the near future, building on the success experienced so far.

## Top tips

- ✓ Identify an ambassador within your organisation who can make connections with the local community.
- ✓ Networking with different staff groups from a range of cultural backgrounds has meant the trust has been able to identify a potential recruitment pool of nurses within its own local area.
- ✓ A training programme for overseas qualified nurses is not a quick fix, however it is a longer-term investment for the future.





## Further information


For more information please contact Adam Kirton, Nurse Recruitment Manager at [Adam.Kirton@glos.nhs.uk](mailto:Adam.Kirton@glos.nhs.uk)



## Contact us

NHS Employers  
2 Brewery Wharf  
Kendell Street  
Leeds LS10 1JR  
Published May 2014  
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[www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)  
[enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)

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