The EU Settlement Scheme has received over two million applications, and NHS organisations have done lots of work already to support EU colleagues to apply.

We’ve prepared a number of suggestions and examples of good practice from NHS trusts that you can use to encourage colleagues to apply to the scheme.

**Identify eligible staff**

The first step is to identify your EU staff and those eligible for the EU Settlement Scheme, if you haven’t already. Some staff will already have applied, but if you want to raise awareness, you’ll need to target the right people.

Some trusts, for example Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, have been able to confidently identify a vast majority of those eligible for the scheme due to the quality of data held on ESR (Electronic Staff Record), with 99.8 per cent of staff having a recorded nationality.

NHS trusts have also identified specific areas of their organisation where there are more eligible EU staff, for instance estates and facilities. These trusts have then been able to target communications or run sessions encouraging applications to the scheme with those staff directly.

While a vast majority of applications will come from EU nationals, some non-EU citizens who are family members of EU staff may be eligible. This is a good reason to ensure the EU Settlement Scheme is profiled in your wider communications too, and staff should be encouraged to verify their eligibility. Where there is any doubt, check on the GOV.UK website.

**Letter from chief executive**

Many trusts, such as Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust, have cascaded communications from the board via the chief executive. This started post referendum in 2016 with the clear message that EU staff were crucial, valued members of the organisation. If you’re considering a similar approach, ongoing communication can be supported through e-mail, your trust’s intranet, events and individual letters.

**Support networks**

One way of reaching and supporting your EU staff is to establish a network for them. University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust set up a support network and invited all staff to briefings and meetings. The network has been led by an EU staff member, with a particularly personal approach. It has also had buy-in from senior staff such as the director of finance. As part of the network, the lead has visited multiple sites to talk to a wide range of staff and listen to their concerns. The network increases activity ahead of key dates, for example, its engagement increased prior to 31 October 2019 when the UK was expected to leave the EU.

**Legal briefings**

Many trusts have commissioned external experts to talk about the EU Settlement Scheme, clarify eligibility and to run question and answer sessions.
Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust enlisted the support of a law firm to deliver three briefings, with significant uptake (around one quarter of their EU workforce attended the first session). They extended it to all legal and immigration issues affecting their existing EU workforce.

Application drop-in sessions
One way of increasing awareness and applications is to run drop-in sessions where HR staff are on hand to support staff with applications to the scheme and help them understand their eligibility. Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust ran walk-in sessions, where IT equipment meeting the EU Settlement Scheme’s technical requirements (for example, Android tablets) was made available. Staff were on hand to help with technical issues.

Liaise with staff side
Working with unions is an important way to ensure your messaging reaches more staff. If you are approaching your workforce with regular communication from leadership, then union colleagues may be able to support with a different, direct approach with staff.

Ensure manager buy-in
Ensuring managers are aware of the scheme and can support their staff to apply is really important. One option for trusts is to contact every line manager, sharing links to the Home Office toolkit and useful associated material, with the aim of educating line managers so they could speak openly to staff about the scheme. There is also a weekly briefing every Monday with senior managers where supporting EU staff has been a regular item. This also allows managers to feedback on any progress with the scheme.

Pay slips
There are some quick methods organisations have used to promote the EU Settlement Scheme, for example County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust has included a message on all staff payslips from September 2019 onwards: “If you (or any EU citizen you know) have any doubt as to what to do in order to continue to live in the UK after it leaves the EU, use this tool.”

While pay slips might not be read by some of your workforce, this approach is a low cost/easy to implement measure that can catch your eligible staff.

Share supporting material
Promotional material for the EU Settlement Scheme, including an employer toolkit, social media graphics, printable posters and factsheets is available on the GOV.UK website.

You can also join the conversation on Twitter using hashtag #LoveOurEUStaff.

NHS Employers
The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

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