



REWARD IN THE NHS

GOOD PRACTICE AND INNOVATION TAKING PLACE ACROSS THE NHS ON REWARD

NOVEMBER 2020



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INTRODUCTION

There is a huge amount of good practice and innovation taking place across the NHS on reward. We want to share with you the key themes that have emerged through the NHS Employers Total Reward Engagement Network (TREN) over the past year.

We established TREN in February 2016. The network provides an opportunity for organisations from across the NHS to come together to share experiences and hear about what other organisations are doing in reward.

In this report, we share the key areas being taken forward and look at how organisations are changing their approach to reward.

We have included quotes from our TREN members throughout the report to share what they have gained from being part of the network.

In early 2019, we carried out a survey across the NHS to identify the approaches being taken by organisations.

The survey highlighted that there are a variety of reward practices in the NHS but organisations do not necessarily have a reward strategy to support these. Instead, reward tends to be part of another strategy. However, there is clearly a desire to use reward as a tool in a more strategic way.

A focus for us, has therefore been to develop resources to support organisations with their approach to reward and how it can help to meet organisational priorities, such as recruitment and retention.

“Great event for networking with the group and sharing valuable ideas.”

“Useful session to check in with colleagues nationally during unprecedented times.”

USING REWARD TO SUPPORT ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

Recruitment and retention are the biggest challenges that employers in the NHS are facing. Reward can be a useful tool in helping to meet these challenges by ensuring staff fully appreciate and understand the value of working for the NHS.

RECRUITMENT

Organisations have highlighted some of the difficulties they face with recruiting new staff. This is often due to geographical challenges and competition from other organisations recruiting from the same pool.

Having a dedicated reward section on trust's websites can be a key part in attracting new members of staff. This showcases to potential employees the benefits and unique rewards they can access. It will also encourage retention, as staff can see their benefits all in one place.

Review our [reward website template](#).

Some websites describe in detail, the support, and opportunities the employer can provide at key stages. Employers are promoting staff development, including training and education, during recruitment and through line managers for established staff.

Recruitment and retention premia (RRP) and relocation packages are sometimes used to attract staff. This tends to be limited to difficult to recruit posts and are most commonly used within the nursing profession, and in physically, mentally and emotionally demanding roles. They are also used where location of services makes recruitment and retention more challenging, such as rural or isolated areas. RRP tends to be restricted to substantive posts and can be up to seven per

cent of salary. Organisations are exploring ways in which they could work more collaboratively to increase the number of staff they recruit without using just RRP.

Refer a friend schemes are used by some organisations, often to overcome difficulties recruiting to specific occupations. Incentives range from monetary reward to additional annual leave. Using these schemes can help organisations find new staff members who are already aware of the duties, constraints, and expectations of roles along with values and behaviours that match those of the organisation.

It is hoped this will also increase the retention of new starters. These schemes are used successfully in specific situations and often only for specified periods of time.

There are also challenges in helping international recruits settle into their new surroundings. This has brought innovation from organisations, including using social media such as closed Facebook groups to link new and existing staff, provide accommodation, and pay new international recruits from the day they arrive as opposed to the day they commence employment. This has helped those employees understand their value to the organisation and adjust to their new environment.

Introducing a two-week induction programme for new starters, which includes a presentation from the benefit and health and wellbeing team has helped organisations when recruiting new staff.

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RETENTION

With up to 44.9 per cent of annual budgets spent on staffing, and with awareness that recruitment can be costly, organisations are considering how reward could be used as a tool to aid retention.

Organisations are increasingly looking at more creative ways of retaining staff, with a focus on non-monetary reward initiatives. The People Plan 2020/21, along with the People Promise, sets behaviours and actions that staff can expect from NHS leaders and colleagues, to improve the experience of working in the NHS for everyone.

One approach includes a 'holiday of a lifetime' scheme where staff can accrue up to five days annual leave each year, for up to five years, and take all the leave at once. This allows staff to have an extended holiday and return to their role. In terms of nurse retention, one example of innovation includes introducing a nurse retention manager to understand why nurses may want to leave the organisation, what they value about their employment and then looking at implementing changes to help to retain these staff.

Trusts are focusing on retention at local level by giving opportunities to staff like career development. Staff appraisals are a great way to communicate with staff and to offer guidance. Amy Davidson, health and wellbeing coordinator, North Cumbria Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, shares how the trust's new appraisal framework has made staff feel more supported in the workplace. [Her blog](#) can be found on our website.

Attrition rates prior to start date can be high, and organisations are trying to reduce this by ensuring they communicate regularly with new starters, from offer letter through to start date, via channels such as social media or smartphone apps. Read [our case study](#) with North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust which has started to look at its new starter journey. The trust also shares the activities that have been taken forward since they joined TREN.

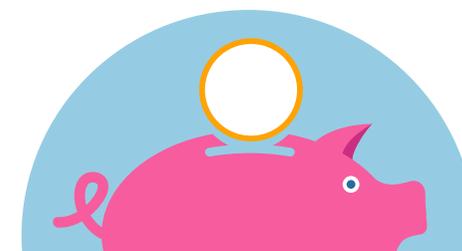
Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has also shared how financial wellbeing in reward was introduced in its organisation in this [case study](#).

Organisations also use salary sacrifice arrangements as a retention tool, such as offering a three-year salary sacrifice car lease scheme. This is seen as a way to encourage loyalty for at least the term of the agreement while providing a benefit that is valued by employees.

Salary sacrifice schemes help to develop financial wellbeing. If a person has good financial health, they are likely to be able to manage debts, save for the future and be worry free from financial stress. For more information on financial wellbeing and developing a financial wellbeing strategy, view our [infographic and guide](#).

Another way in which organisations are taking action to retain staff is by introducing exit interviews to understand the reasons why staff are leaving the organisation.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust has around 450 administration staff, which equates to 15 per cent of its workforce. In 2017 the trust held an event for their staff, when feedback was received their administration staff felt that the event was too clinically driven, and therefore felt unappreciated. These events resulted in increased feelings of engagement within these staff groups, increased staff morale and stronger engagement between admin staff themselves.



BENEFITS AND REWARD

TREN members have shared a wide variety of rewards they offer.

Salary sacrifice

NHS Pension Scheme

Home electronics

Cycle to work scheme

Flexible working

Car lease scheme

Car parking

Car lease scheme

Accommodation

Buy/sell annual leave

Housing

Travel benefits

Family friendly

Pay and conditions

Discounts

Learning and development

Recognition

Discounted season tickers

Physiotherapy services

Long service awards

Refer a friend

Health and wellbeing

Fast track referrals

Occupational health

Shuttle bus service

On-site nurseries

Annual leave

Counselling

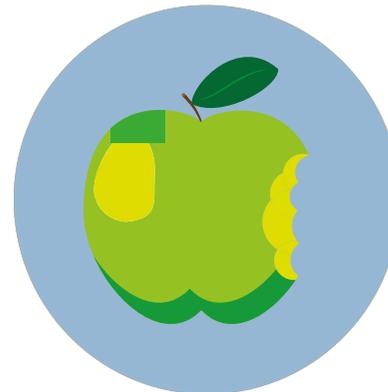
SALARY SACRIFICE

Most organisations offer some form of salary sacrifice, the most popular being the cycle to work schemes. Organisations are keen to introduce benefits that reduce travel costs for staff.

Buying and selling annual leave is also a popular benefit for organisations. Employees can accrue annual leave over a prolonged period and gain the option to use this leave to take an extended holiday.

Other popular salary sacrifice schemes:

- Non-monetary rewards are popular with organisations and valued by staff.
- Recognition schemes and long service awards are offered throughout organisations, though the approach varies.
- Refer a friend schemes are a benefit offered by organisations to their staff and new candidates. These vary from monetary to annual leave.
- Health and wellbeing have emerged as a focus for reward in many organisations.



COMMUNICATING REWARD

Evidence tells us that many NHS employees are not aware of the range of rewards and benefits offered by their employer. It's therefore more important than ever to make the most of what you're offering and how it is communicated. If your employees understand the benefits available to them, they will place a higher value on their overall reward package and will be able to make informed decisions.

There are a wide range of benefits offered across the NHS but most organisations feel their communication of these could be improved, particularly communication of the entire reward offer.

Only a small number of organisations have a communications plan specifically for reward with some involving their communications teams for specific pieces of work as required. It would be useful to seek advice and involve communication teams in any plans for reward communications.

Trusts generally use a variety of communication channels and some consider the preferred communication routes of their staff to ensure their message is received by all employees. However, it can be a challenge for organisations spread across a larger geographical area and over a number of sites to communicate the offer to staff. This can be a particular issue where organisation have community-based workers who do not have consistent or direct access to a computer.

Other organisations are challenged by communicating with their staff over multiple sites, including rural locations and prisons.

Top tips to help with communicating reward

- Involve your comms team.
- Use as many formats as possible.
- Consider different learning styles.
- Get buy in from senior staff.
- Include pictures on social media posts.
- Highlight career and develop opportunities.
- Use of twitter and Facebook accounts as a way of communicating key messages.
- Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS ran hot house events to communicate its reward offer and find out what is important to their staff.
- Mid Yorkshire Hospitals ran six roadshows and around 1,800 staff attended across six locations.



Staff handbook

Roadshows

Benefits leaflet

Total reward statements

Website

Newsletters

Communications from chief executive

Intranet

Screensavers

Reward website section

Emails

Posters

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Rewards and benefits are communicated by employers through various routes.

Payslip leaflets

Social media

Staff room

Recruitment advertising

New starter induction

Smartphone app

Job adverts

Weekly bulletin

Staff weekly round-up

NHS Jobs

Employee benefits day

STAFF BENEFITS ALL IN ONE PLACE

Organisations have a multitude of benefits available but these are not communicated as effectively as they could be. It has become a focus for some to house their reward information in one place, including wider benefits such as those relating to health and wellbeing. The overall information is then used for recruitment, by managers, on trusts' external websites and on intranets.

Where the information is not in one place, it is felt this can lead to an increased work load in terms of answering questions from staff and employees who are less aware and engaged with the benefits available. The use of NHS Jobs to promote the entire reward offer is not widely utilised which is surprising given this is a single way to raise awareness with potential recruits.

BENEFIT ROADSHOWS

Benefit roadshows are a popular way to highlight the overall reward offer to staff and engage with them about the range of benefits. Roadshows have been used as a way to launch new benefits, smartphone apps and reward branding. Information from staff surveys suggest that these are a good way to help employees become more familiar with the reward offer and branding. The roadshows are often self-funded with the support of suppliers.

Read [our blog](#) from when colleagues attended the 'Benefits Everyone Summer Festival' at the Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

BENEFIT CHAMPIONS

The introduction of benefit champions was an innovative approach taken by one organisation and has resulted in increased awareness of the reward offer. The trust used benefit roadshows to recruit the champions.

Read our [case study](#) with Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust to find out how it recruited the network of champions to share information about rewards and staff benefits.



Total Reward Statements



Totally about you

TOTAL REWARD STATEMENTS (TRS)

TRS provides a useful way to communicate with staff about the total value of their reward package including pay and pension benefits. TRS can be tailored to include any local benefits that are unique to each organisation. TRS is communicated in a range of ways each year when refreshed statements are first available and also via reminders throughout the year. The resources provided by NHS Business Services Authority, such as the posters and screensavers, are well used.

Where an organisation's access route is through Government Gateway, some provide advanced notice of the log-in process so that staff are able to access statements more easily when they become available.

SMARTPHONE APPS

The use of smartphones apps to promote trust information and benefits is increasing. The apps tend to be developed through an external company. The intention of the apps is to provide up-to-date information, increase awareness of the offer and be available to staff that do not have regular access to a computer.

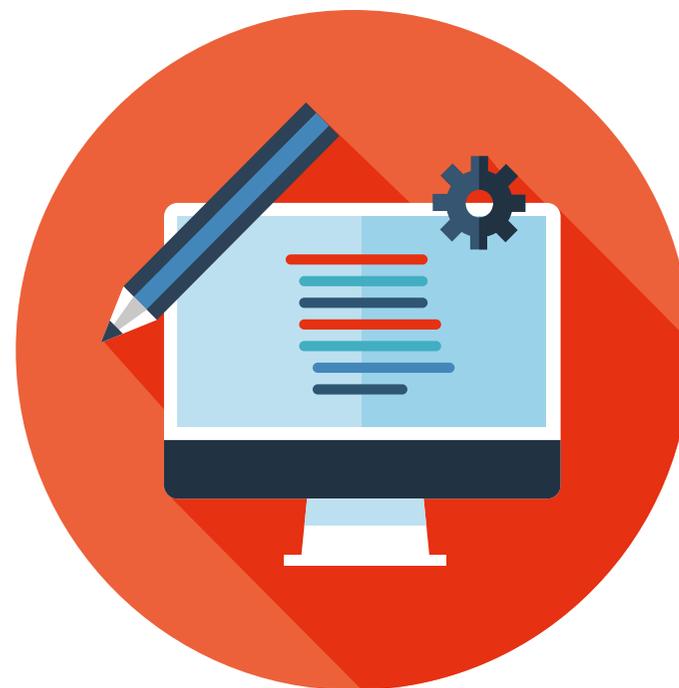
REWARD BRANDING

Creating a brand identity for an organisation's reward offer is popular with many organisations. This helps staff to recognise information about reward when it is communicated. This branding is used on all communications with staff, such as on the intranet or newsletters.

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a mutual staff recognition site, linked to its online benefits platform. This was launched and promoted during the pandemic for staff to virtually recognise each other.

Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust launched a staff connect app which has been very beneficial during the coronavirus pandemic to send the key messages to staff, especially to those staff who did not have access to their work computer system.

Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust **encouraged its staff** to access their statements, achieving a 48 per cent access rate in 2015-16, which put it in the top five trusts for that period.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Organisations are actively promoting reward using social media, with the most popular channels including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Some organisations have used local press to increase coverage of positive stories from the trust which has improved staff survey results.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops are a good way to engage staff to understand more about a work area, an area of health and wellbeing, or a part of the reward package. For further reference read [our blog](#) by Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust (CHFT) on the trust's recent engagement with staff to help build and tailor its reward offer.

In 2019 NHS Digital introduced workshops based around health and wellbeing such as sleep workshops and personal resilience workshops.

Lewisham and Greenwich NHS has invited other companies to hold workshops on financial advice, including high street banks. York Teaching Hospitals has also taken this approach, the board has signed off 10 days paid training leave for employees. The trust launched this initiative at the end June 2019, with other things such as line manager workshops around culture and behaviour.

Trusts are increasingly introducing workshops for their employees, some of the examples are:

- financial education sessions
- signposting employees to information
- promoting credit unions
- promoting cheaper accommodation for employees
- providing travel season ticket loans
- pension workshops annually
- retirement workshops.

Trusts are continuing to offer these workshops, as staff are reporting back asking for more sessions.

NHS Employers has run several workshops throughout past TREN sessions, including sessions on:

- financial wellbeing
- evaluating approach to reward
- sharing solutions on challenges
- communications workshop.

BENEFIT PLATFORMS

Benefit platforms are used as a way for employees to view information and access the benefits that are available. Organisations also use the data from these to inform their approach, target communications and assess how popular benefits are. The use of benefit platforms is increasingly popular, and several organisations have used Vivup.

NEW EMPLOYEES

The use of on-boarding and induction to communicate reward is an area that organisations have begun to look at. The induction process and new starter journey varies across organisations. It is felt that the reward offer could be promoted more effectively during this time to ensure what was communicated during the recruitment phase is reflected when the new employee begins employment. New starter packs are often provided which include details of staff benefits.

Some organisations check back in with staff, via email or survey, after a set period of time to ask how their first few months have gone. Other organisations have introduced a two-week induction programme for new starters which includes a presentation from the benefit team and health and wellbeing team.

THE OVERALL REWARD OFFER

The overall reward offer for employees can include a broad range of benefits such as health and wellbeing, learning and career development opportunities, support from managers, the culture of the organisation, and pay and conditions. It is important for employees to understand the full range of benefits available to them, including the financial and non-financial.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health and wellbeing has emerged as a focus for many organisations. It is an important part of the reward offer, however, it is not often communicated as being part of the offer so can be viewed by staff as separate. Having an overall reward brand which includes health and wellbeing, has helped some organisations overcome this.

Health and wellbeing initiatives are an effective method of showing staff they are valued by their employer. They are often well received initiatives that staff can become involved in. For example, giving staff an additional half an hour per week to use to support their wellbeing, such as taking an extended lunch break to take part in an exercise class or go for a walk. Results indicate that the initiative has been well received and senior staff have led by example to encourage staff to make use of this additional time.

Essential healthcare plans are being introduced by employers, offering their staff cash plans at a reduced rate which allows staff to claim money back towards the cost of their essential healthcare such as prescription glasses, eye tests, contact lenses and dental care.

Organisations are also working towards the health and wellbeing commissioning for quality and innovation framework (CQUIN) payment framework.

Read this [case study](#) from United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT) which highlights how the trust planned an engagement event to promote it's reward and health and wellbeing offer to staff.

There are a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives provided by organisations:

- free health checks
- access to fast track physiotherapy referrals
- resilience training
- sessions such as walking, running, cycling, pilates and yoga
- fast-track physiotherapy referrals
- psychological and talking therapies such as counselling or
- mindfulness classes
- mental health first aider training courses
- physical therapies such as reflexology, massage, chiropractic
- services and chiropody
- maternity workshops
- occupational health
- smoking cessation clinics
- weight loss clinics or dietetics referral options
- mediation services
- pre-retirement courses
- reward groups focusing on financial wellbeing
- extended lunch breaks to take part in an exercise class or go for a walk
- health and wellbeing information for new starters.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Promoting the learning and development opportunities available is a vital part of ensuring staff are aware and understand how they can access them. Highlighting this effectively from recruitment, through the new employee process and to the existing workforce, is an important part of communicating the overall reward offer. This has also become a focus for organisations.

There are many learning and development opportunities available within organisations:

- work experience
- apprenticeship schemes
- preceptorships and mentoring/coaching
- stretch projects
- talent management
- specialist qualifications
- secondments.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND WELLBEING

Financial wellbeing webinars have become popular within organisations, offering staff financial education. Read our [financial wellbeing guide](#) which aims to support in developing a thriving strategy for staff financial wellbeing.

PAY AND CONDITIONS

An employee's pay and conditions of employment form an important part of the overall reward offer and includes areas such as access to the NHS Pension Scheme, annual leave allowance, flexible working

arrangements, and family friendly leave and benefits. Organisations are increasingly starting to communicate these benefits as part of their overall reward package and are considering ways to be more flexible in their approach.

One way in which organisations are communicating pay and conditions, is through Total Reward Statements (TRS). TRS are designed to help improve communication with employees, to help them understand and appreciate their overall reward package.

A TRS is a personalised summary that shows employees their reward package, including:

- basic pay
- allowances
- pension benefits for NHS Pension Scheme members.



RECOGNITION

Recognising the achievements of staff can be a useful tool to help increase staff morale, staff engagement and reducing staff turnover. Understanding how staff like to be recognised will help you align your schemes with what staff value.

Organisations should recognise and motivate their entire workforce, including clinical and non-clinical.

Read our [case study](#) with Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, on how it celebrates, recognises and engages with its admin staff.

Trusts are rewarding staff for their service by giving them a voucher with the value of how many years they have been employed in their trust. Barnsley Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust offers free tea and coffee days for nurses and admin staff to encourage employees to take a break and reward them for their work.

When staff have been asked how they would like to be recognised, some organisations found that most like a simple thank you as opposed to an award. A number of organisations have opted for recognition schemes such as thank you cards, flowers or visits from members of the senior team. However, evaluation of the annual award event at one organisation showed that 94 per cent of respondents felt more engaged and valued following the event. This highlights the importance of understanding your workforce.

Organisations continue to communicate the recognition staff receive in a variety of ways, such as on noticeboards, social media and scrolling screens in staff areas. In one organisation, staff choose how they are recognised, which has included being given a certificate or having their photo in the trust magazine. Long service awards often include monetary reward, however, organisations that use pin badges and certificates to recognise long service describe how popular these are with staff. Staff feel very proud to wear their pin badges. Most organisations recognise service to the organisation and a small number recognise overall NHS service.

RECOGNITION DURING COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic many organisations adapted their approach to reward and recognition and created alternative plans for annual staff awards. For example, running weekly briefs by chief executive where winners are presented with a certificate and small monetary gift. This was then broadcasted at mid-day every Wednesday to appreciate the staff for all their hard work during COVID.

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS created virtual networks for staff who are shielding and are in vulnerable groups to support them and make them feel part of the team.

Other reward and recognition schemes, that some organisations have introduced or adapted during the pandemic include:

- Presenting staff with a recognition badge as an acknowledgement for their hard work.
- Virtual staff awards and long-service ceremony.
- 'Thank you' weeks to show staff appreciation.
- Rainbow badges sent out during lockdown as part of a 'thank you' package.

Recognition schemes are widely used by organisations. Schemes include:

- employee or team of the month
- annual award ceremonies
- long service and retirement awards
- thank you cards
- newsletter articles
- scrolling screens in staff areas with visible thank you messages
- volunteer awards
- thank you flowers.

TESTING AND EVALUATING THE REWARD OFFER

It is important to test your approach to understand how effective your reward activities are. This will help you to better communicate your activities and their value. Although organisations do not extensively test or evaluate their approaches, there is clearly a desire to take this forward to help inform future approaches to reward and ensure the offer is what staff value.

TESTING

Generally, organisations either test the desirability of rewards with a small cross section of the workforce or through surveys. Focus groups or listening exercises provide invaluable feedback directly from staff on what they value. There are some organisations that pilot potential benefits before launching these with sections of the workforce.

Some organisations have begun to carry out a review of their reward offer to aid their recruitment and retention challenges and to ensure the offer reflects what staff want and value. This includes analysing the existing offer, canvassing for staff opinions on what benefits they value and which new benefits they would like to see introduced.

EVALUATING

Many organisations evaluate the reward and benefits package. Feedback from staff informs approaches and is sought through various methods. Organisations realise the importance of feeding back to staff so that they understand any changes to benefits or how their feedback has helped to influence change.

Gathering feedback from staff is important to know how people are feeling and to evaluate across reward initiatives. Facebook group pages are becoming popular among organisations; it is a quick way for employers to get feedback from their staff on how the organisation is doing.

Where an evaluation has taken place on new initiatives, this information and data has been important to identify how staff feel, the level of take up and to understand who is accessing the benefits. Organisations that have benefit platforms also use the data from these to assess the levels of take up and any profit generated. A useful way to seek feedback from staff is during benefit roadshows while employees are already engaged with the reward offer. This can be simple in approach but quickly assess the impact of any initiatives.

Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust **evaluated the effectiveness** of a new method of communicating staff benefits and its workforce with benefit champions.



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Over the past year, TREN members have shared their experiences with reward, examples of good practice and their areas of focus. These have been developed with feedback from the network to ensure the resources we produce fit with the needs of the organisation. These resources help trusts to see how other organisations are using reward and can help them engage with staff, evaluate their reward offer and gather intel. These include resources:

- [Podcast: Reward outside the NHS](#)
- [Top tips for developing a reward strategy](#)
- [What we learned from reward in the NHS 2019](#)

COMMUNICATING REWARD

- [Communicating your reward offer](#)
- [The role of managers in communicating reward](#)
- [Communicating reward to new employees](#)
- [Employee benefits leaflet template](#)
- [The value of the NHS Pension Scheme poster](#)
- [Total Reward Statements local benefits checklist](#)
- [Checklist for evaluating reward](#)
- [Communicating reward guide and template](#)
- [A summer festival for reward and benefits](#)
- [Top tips for developing a reward strategy](#)

REWARD TO SUPPORT ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

- [Using reward in recruitment](#)
- [Reward Survey 2019 results](#)
- [Checklist for evaluating reward](#)

CASE STUDIES AND BLOGS

- [Using benefit champions to promote reward](#)
- [Using Health and wellbeing as part of the reward offer](#)
- [Reward as part of an effective recruitment strategy](#)
- [Using mobile technology for reward communications](#)
- [Introducing financial wellbeing in reward](#)
- [Reward to support staff retention](#)
- [Valuing admin staff](#)
- [What we learned from reward in the NHS 2019](#)
- [Being the employer of choice – reward in integrated care systems](#)
- [Improving reward through employee benefits groups](#)

Find out more about reward and access further resources at www.nhsemployers.org/reward

To join the NHS Employers Total Reward Engagement Network or to tell us what you think about our products and resources, email: reward@nhsemployers.org



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