

Understanding your data



Understanding workforce data should be at the centre of an effective retention strategy. Collecting and analysing data and identifying trends will help to identify the starting point for your activities. Understanding the profile of your workforce will help you to assess the risk points and ensure that retention issues affecting particular groups are addressed. For example, are retention issues organisationwide or specific to certain staff groups, demographics, departments or teams? If a specific staff group in your organisation are more likely to leave than others, what are the main reasons and how can you address these issues? An equality analysis will be useful to assess if there are retention issues affecting specific groups.

To better understand your data, consider who in your organisation you could work with. Your informatics or data analytics colleagues can help to understand and explore the data, including the NHS leaver rate; demographic data of workforce and leavers; turnover rates and reasons for leaving; sickness rates and retention related staff survey questions. This data can be found in a range of sources including:

Local data sources:

- Locally designed surveys.

- Workforce information from Electronic Staff Record (ESR).
- Staff turnover and stability rates.
- Exit surveys and exit interviews.
- Conversations with existing staff.

National data sources:

- NHS Staff Survey: Research shows that the morale and engagement theme scores from the NHS Staff Survey have a strong correlation and statistical significance with retention. There are specific questions within the NHS Staff Survey that can help to understand staff feedback on whether people are thinking of leaving and various elements of the People Promise such as flexible working or health and wellbeing support.
- National Quarterly Pulse Survey, People Pulse, Model Health System retention compartment and data from national organisations such as NHS Digital can all provide useful insights into retention and related indicators of staff experience.

Things to consider

- What data already exists within the organisation and who has access to it? How can different departments work collaboratively to collect this?
- What information will support the team, directorate and organisational decision-making processes?
- Do you need to introduce new data sources? If so, can you develop and design these with different people and departments within your organisation?
- Could you improve the decision-making process around what data you need, the way you collect it and how you use and present it?
- Does analysis of your data show any key themes or trends? There could be specific issues that affect different staff groups or departments more than others, and these could change over time. Understanding

- How does your organisation compare or benchmark against other local or similar organisations? Can you engage with neighbouring employers and across your ICS area to better understand where you can work collaboratively to address shared issues?
- How will you use your data to evaluate the changes you make? Consider looking at a range of indicators beyond staff turnover, for example, sickness absence or staff engagement.

Making this happen

Leaders can:

- Support a data-led approach to retention across your organisation and support putting methods in place to achieve this.
- Have regular conversations with their staff to improve their understanding of factors affecting retention in their teams.
- Work with HR to understand reasons for leaving raised in exit interviews from staff members in their team.

Managers can:

- Take a data led approach to inform their understanding of factors affecting retention within their organisation.
- Use data to evaluate how effective the organisation's retention approach has been.
- Implement free tools such as the People Pulse to gather data and ensure you are listening to staff voice.

Case studies

- Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire completed initial data diagnostics to identify patterns, trends, and key areas for focus, as part of a 90-day quality improvement cycle. This helped them to develop a system wide retention improvement action plan that responds to areas identified through data diagnostics.

- Keen to reduce attrition, improve staff engagement, motivation, and retention, West London NHS Trust reviewed its exit interview data in collaboration with GreatwithTalent and developed a new initiative 'Promotion, praise and promise'. This initiative has recently won a Healthcare People Management Award (HPMA) and saw a nearly 10 per cent drop in early attrition.
- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust used the People Pulse to listen to staff voice and turn listening into action to improve their overall experience.

Tools and further reading

- Keep up to date with interventions and practical solutions on NHS England and NHS Improvement's website.
- NHS England and NHS Improvement has worked with the NHS Business Services Authority and NHS Wales to refresh the ESR exit interview questionnaire. It is available to all organisations using ESR self-service and allows the employee to self-report their reason for leaving and state what, if anything, would have kept them in the organisation.
- You may need to address retention issues affecting particular groups. Read this guidance to understand the profile of and address retention issues specific to anaesthetists.
- The National GP Retention Scheme is a package of financial and educational support to help doctors, who might otherwise leave the profession to remain.