

Recommendations

The survey results clearly demonstrate that there is some great work taken place throughout the region to increase patient safety standards and to support the need for more nurses, by building up a strong team of highly skilled HCSWs. It is also possible to identify improvements that have been made in the recruitment and onboarding of HCSWs since the first survey and data set in June 2021.

However, the report also highlights there is much more that can be done within the trusts to increase the speed of a candidate's experience and ensures that they feel valued and supported throughout.

Preparing a clear and structured induction programme, which flows over a set amount of time and includes key figures and important contact details, creates confidence on both sides of the recruiting team: the application on the ward and the HR team in the offices. Not knowing where anything is or who to ask for support can leave new recruits feeling anxious and scared and thus unwilling to commit long term to an organisation that pays such poor attention to their mental wellbeing.

Providing an induction booklet which lists key terminology definitions and information about any diversity groups such as an LGBT+ staff network or disability awareness group, as well as the details of a line manager and peer support buddy, allows feelings of engagement and accessibility.

There are synergies between the results of this survey and the smaller sample recently collated by the nursing workforce improvement team at NHSE&I, which focused on the retention of HCSWs. These include:

- expectations v reality of the role
- the length of time between shortlisting and starting in post
- visibility and support to progress in career
- dissatisfaction with trust induction
- room for improvement for training and manager/peer support.

We have split our recommendations into the following survey question categories; attraction, recruitment and onboarding, retention and professional development.

Attraction

NHS Jobs has clearly been the most successful advertising route for HCSWs in the region, with Indeed and family and friends' referral also showing success rates.

We would encourage trusts to continue local job opportunity promotion, using the We are the NHS campaign.

By ensuring a positive candidate experience, candidates are more likely to accept a job offer, more likely to apply for another job in their organisation if they are not successful the first time around, and they are more likely to refer others to the organization, which will grow the talent pool.

The NHS Employers Inspire, Attract and Recruit Toolkit, updated quarterly, brings together information and guidance on how to be a leading employer to attract the right people into the workforce.

We would encourage all employers to access the NHS Employers website and the pages specific to inclusive recruitment.

There is a great library of resources listed on these pages, including podcasts, webinars and case studies, all of which cover the topics areas key to this work on recruitment and retention.

For example, a handbook containing a series of practical, bite-sized guides about recruiting and retaining young people in the NHS.

It is vital to ensure that all recruitment processes are inclusive and in line with the commitments in the NHS People Plan. As with the 2021 survey, the 2022 results show the workforce in the region is typically female and of white ethnicity.

All NHS employers can access further guidance on inclusive recruitment on the NHS Employers website:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/publications/inclusive-recruitment-guidance>

- Inclusive recruitment podcast episode one

- Inclusive recruitment episode two

Organisational reputation is key, so by getting recruitment right and ensuring new recruits feel valued, informed, supported, and encouraged to progress, will improve the reputation as an employer of choice in the local community.

Some helpful suggestions to improve the recruitment process included:

- Informative job descriptions and more information on the scope of the role.
- Contacting local community groups and sharing the advertisement with them.
- A tour of the wards and hospital prior to starting in post (COVID-19 permitting).
- A discussion about the roster system, how to use it, weekend working, any on-call requirements, any regional placements, annual leave, and the additional pay for doing unsocial hour shifts.
- Clear instructions on any online training that must be completed prior to start date and how to access it.
- Information on how to join the staff bank.
- Information on how to transfer any existing pension.

Recruitment and onboarding

To ensure that potential employees gain a positive experience right from the start, application candidates must have as smooth a recruitment process as possible.

The survey data shows that this has been the case for many HCSWs, and the recruitment experience has been positive and reactive. However, for others it has been very lengthy and confusing. Maintaining regular contact with candidates throughout the process is key, particularly whilst pre-employment checks are underway.

Recruitment creates an increased workload for HR teams. Investing in some new recruitment technology could have a very noticeable, positive impact. Robotic process automation (RPA) can help to improve onboarding and many NHS teams and departments are now using such tools. It enables the digitalisation of paper processes, reduces the time taken to hire and the need for data input tasks, which often carry the risk of human error. Further information on RPA can be found on the [NHS Employers website](#).

Many candidates will expect such systems to be in place, having experienced them at other organisations, and may be surprised if they do not experience something similar as they go through the recruitment process with the NHS. To find out more, including best practice, please visit the [NHS Employers website](#).

COVID-19 has impacted the way new staff are recruited, and it was clear from the survey responses that candidates are aware of this impact and understand why it must be this way.

However, the responses also highlight that expectations exist around the quality of virtual engagement. A high-quality of virtual engagement is essential to compensate for the lack of face-to-face time. Comments from respondents show that these expectations are often not being met. There is a clear, identified need for more resources, either via virtual learning or paper publications that can be taken, studied, and referred to when necessary.

It is also important that recruiters are aware of technology poverty. Some candidates may not be particularly IT literate or be able to afford connection to the internet. Support with the application process must be available and documents need to be presented in clear fonts such as Arial (size 12). All questions must be clear and unambiguous, to show an awareness of the needs of someone with dyslexia and/or for whom English is not their first language.

NHS Employers has developed [guidance](#) to support employers with remote recruitment and onboarding to help ensure a positive [candidate experience](#).

Values-based recruitment

The majority of HCSWs who submitted a response rated the job advertisement, interview process and induction as effective or highly effective. However, only 7 per cent responded that nothing could be improved about the process. The often-lengthy wait that applicants had to endure between the interview, outcome and the job commencing was a comment that occurred frequently.

351 HCSWs out of the 576 that completed the survey advised that the trust values featured in either the advert, interview, induction or indeed in all three. NHS Employers recommends including values in every stage of the recruitment process. More information on values-based recruitment can be found on the NHS Employers website, including a readiness checklist.

Value-based hiring or recruitment is not a new approach, the idea has long been in the recruitment industry. The overall process from strategic hiring to recruitment is termed as value-based hiring.

As the candidate's values and beliefs drive his/her behaviour, they are considered as vital components in his/her recruitment. When a newly hired employee's culture preferences align with the work environment of a company, he/she not only feels happy in the new role but also gives the best performance. 70 HCSWs whose trust values featured in the recruitment process stated they wish to remain in their current trust.

Prioritising the NHS core values, as well as the local trust values, throughout the recruitment process is tremendously advantageous when trying to find a candidate who is the right fit for the brand. When companies focus on the core values in daily work life, all members of the team work with the same consistency and aspirations.

These values of the NHS can help guide the structure of the induction and give confidence to the employer and employee.

Values of the NHS Constitution

- Working together for patients.
- Patients come first in everything we do.
- Respect and dignity.

- Commitment to quality of care.
- Compassion.
- Improving lives.
- Everyone counts.

The benefits of value-based recruitment and efficient recruitment plans are not confined to just bringing every employee to the same page.

The approach or strategy of value-based recruitment offers many other benefits to the organisations, these can include:

- A progressive and healthy working environment.
- Improved productivity.
- Better staff morale.
- Decreased employee turnover.
- Increased employee engagement and sustainability.

Embedding organisational values at every step of the recruitment and induction journey translates into much better working practice and, ultimately, patient care.

Induction

A positive first impression will have a very beneficial impact on a recruitment candidate, so it is vital to have a clear corporate induction programme checklist which encompasses all elements of the induction programme. Assign specific team members to the relevant area to ensure progress and completion. Also, make sure that this checklist is regularly reviewed and updated to keep in line with any policy and procedure updates.

It may be worth working with the HCSWs already in post in the team to consult on the induction structure in place. Their own experiences can

help improve and enhance the process for any new recruits.

The 2022 survey results and feedback indicate gaps in processes which have led to uncertainty and dissatisfaction in the HCSWs' initial days and weeks in post. This has a very negative impact on morale and commitment levels.

An induction must always start with the fundamentals of the role such as uniform allocation; name and contact details of a line manager; pay and pension information; IT access and support; and career progression opportunities.

As with the first survey, there were high numbers of HCSWs who were not informed about trade union representation nor made aware of the Carers Passport. We would also encourage these to feature in induction.

A recent case study on introducing a Working Carers Passport can be found on the NHS Employers website.

A lack of peer and mentor support again featured as a theme in the survey and, where possible, new HCSWs should be given the opportunity to work with and shadow peers to gain understanding and confidence. Creating a buddy system for the initial induction period instantly reduces feelings of anxiety and stress in a new HCSW.

Professional development

As the results demonstrate, professional development is one of the main reasons HCSWs are keen to stay in their trust.

127 HCSWs stated they had not been informed of career progression options or were unsure if they had, so more can be done to help ensure progression route information is made available to HCSWs, particularly nursing, to help support the additional 50,000 nurse commitment.

Encouragingly, 13 per cent of HCSWs are seeking to pursue a nursing career and some are underway with their training. We would hope to see an increase in the response rate to this question in survey two across the

region, with increased focus in articulating to HCSWs the opportunities available.

Completion of the Care Certificate has varied across the region, and it is important that HCSWs are made aware of it during induction and supported to complete it. As indicated above, this should be a feature in any induction checklist. It is important that trusts ask a new recruit if they have previously completed a Care Certificate so the new recruit has an opportunity to share that information, which will then save time as they will not have to redo this in their new trust.

The NHS Employers nurse supply infographic describes the various routes into nursing including the nurse degree apprenticeship route. This can help employers understand the various routes available and discuss options with their HCSWs.

Helping staff realise and harness potential is one of the key responsibilities as a manager and the NHS Employers People Performance Management Toolkit has been designed to encourage line managers to make time for these important conversations. It is accompanied by a communications pack to help employers encourage managers in trusts to use the toolkit and be equipped to support high achievers.