

Getting started

There is no single action that will improve retention. Retaining staff is a result of the combined actions that are taken by an organisation or system at each stage outlined in this toolkit, aligned to the People Promise and the NHS LTWP. As an integral part of your international recruitment process teams, organisations and systems should work collaboratively to support retention activities and share good practice.

For systems working towards a collaborative approach to international recruitment, this toolkit provides resources to initiate and support preliminary discussions. For further information on working across systems, go to the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#) for advice on where and how to start, and see a useful checklist on how to become a lead recruiter from overseas in your region or system.

It may be useful to consider how you can use your workforce data to learn more about the experience(s) of international staff currently working within your organisation.

Our self-assessment checklist below will enable you to check your progress against the key factors that are known to support the retention of international staff.

Understanding your data

The NHS LTWP highlights the opportunity for organisations to make better use of national tools to more regularly use employee engagement metrics to inform improvement plans.

NHS Staff Survey data has been aligned to the seven People Promise elements and two themes: staff engagement and morale. This provides a comprehensive overview of employee experience and is consistent across the NHS in England. The results dashboard can be broken down to provide results for international staff. You may wish to use this data to spot trends and follow up on what your staff are telling you.

How to find the data breakdown:

- Access the [NHS Staff Survey website](#).
- Click [interactive results](#).
- Using the local or national dashboard option, click on the 'Breakdown – scores' or 'Breakdown – questions' tab.
- On the 'Select breakdown' dropdown menu, click 'Recruited from outside UK (International recruitment)'.

The NHS Staff Survey interactive [dashboard](#) allows users to filter data by two demographics simultaneously at a national, regional and ICS level. For example, nurses and doctors recruited from outside of the UK.

[The People Pulse](#) allows access to more frequent data to identify experiences of colleagues who were recruited from outside of the UK.

Additionally, if organisations use the People Pulse as their data collection method for the [National Quarterly Pulse Survey](#), they will also benefit from the breakdown of employee engagement scores by internationally recruited staff, on quarterly basis.

[The Workforce Race Equality Standard \(WRES\) report 2022](#) highlights the experience of black and minority ethnic (BME) people working in the NHS (which may include a high proportion of internationally recruited staff) and will enable you to compare your organisation's performance with others in the region and can support collaboration and improvements locally or regionally.

Make use of tools such as the [Electronic Staff Record \(ESR\)](#) to collect data on career progression rates for your international staff and compare with domestic staff. Are there any disparities? ESR has also refreshed the exit interview questionnaire, which allows staff who are leaving to self-report their reasons and state what, if anything, would have kept them in the organisation.

Local workforce data may hold information on the experience of international staff in your organisation and can potentially help you to identify and tackle any issues they may face.

- Locally designed surveys or conversations with existing international staff can highlight any issues or challenges and ensure they are addressed early.
- If international staff do decide to leave, seek honest feedback either as part of your normal leaving process, or have specific discussions on their experience to improve the experience of existing and future international staff.

Insights from employee listening methods, whether they are led nationally or locally, should be maximised to gain an insight into employee experience in a holistic way. See the [Listening Well Guide](#), which provides organisations with a blueprint for developing a comprehensive employee listening strategy.

Other tools

See Understanding your data in the [Improving Staff Retention Guide](#) for further guidance.

NHS England has developed an interactive and practical [Civility and Respect Toolkit](#) with a framework for organisations to help tackle bullying and harassment and to create a civil and respectful workplace culture. Organisations are encouraged to use the [Violence Prevention and Reduction Standard](#), to look at how they address violence against our workforce.

NHS England's [NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework](#) includes a diagnostic tool to self-assess your organisation and provides a high-level culture change toolkit aimed at health and wellbeing staff, human resources (HR) and organisational development (OD) staff, and anyone with an interest in health and wellbeing.

In addition NHS England's [team health and wellbeing guide](#), a range of simple activities designed to enable teams to look after their own health and wellbeing more effectively.

NHS Employers' [eight elements of positive staff experience](#), created in collaboration with health and wellbeing, staff experience, HR and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) leads, outlines the critical steps and considerations for achieving a robust and sustainable staff experience programme/initiative to support people to stay well in work.

Survey of existing international nurses

NHS Employers · Ruby Survey Of Existing International Nurses

Self-assessment

Our self-assessment checklist below will enable you to measure how well your organisation is currently supporting international staff and where you might need further information or to take action. The questions are based on research by the University of Huddersfield on the factors that are known to support the retention of international nurses but can apply to all professions in your internationally recruited workforce.

It is important to be as open as possible when completing the survey, as this will provide you with an idea of where your organisation may need to focus. Where you identify areas for further development, please visit the relevant section in this toolkit for more information, helpful tips, practical good practice examples, and signposts to useful resources.

Key:

- Red - We have not addressed this area in our organisation or system.
- Amber - We need to do further work in this area in our organisation or system.

- Green - We have addressed this area effectively in our organisation or system.

Self-assessment questions

1. We have a robust approach to understanding our international data in our organisation, which gives us useful insight into the experience of international staff, including reasons for leaving. (Go to Understanding your data)
2. We proactively engage with new international staff in the months before they arrive in the UK to understand their motivations for migration and provide pre-arrival information and support. (Go to Creating strong foundations)
3. We acknowledge and recognise the depth of experience that international colleagues bring to our organisation and consider this when considering their starting salary. The NHS terms and conditions of service handbook, Annex 23 Point 11 relates to starting salary. However, Annex 23 Point 17 and Section 12.2 states that 'employers have the discretion to take into account any period or periods of employment outside the NHS, where these are judged to be relevant to NHS employment'. (Go to Creating strong foundations)
4. We have a comprehensive approach to welcoming new international staff so that they feel settled in their new role and local community. (Go to Making new recruits feel welcome)
5. We understand cultural differences and celebrate the cultures of our international staff, so they feel a sense of true belonging within our organisation. (Go to Building belonging)
6. We acknowledge the depth of experience that international staff bring to our organisation and actively support their personal and professional growth (Go to Maximising personal and professional growth)

While this self-assessment focuses on retaining internationally recruited staff in the NHS, other tools are available to complement retention strategies across your whole workforce:

- NHS Employers [Improving staff retention](#) web resource contains an interactive traffic-light tool to help you understand where you might want to focus your efforts first.
- NHS England's [nursing and midwifery self-assessment tool](#) supports you in retaining your nursing and midwifery staff and encourages trusts to develop and implement local evidence-based retention improvement plans.