Getting started

There is no single action that will solve 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. 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 (page 6), and see a useful checklist (page 7) on how to become a lead recruiter from overseas in your region.

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 will enable you to check your progress against the key factors that are known to support the retention of international staff.

Understanding your data

Your workforce data holds useful insights into the lived experience of international staff in your organisation and can help you to identify the issues you are trying to solve. For example, is there high or low turnover in particular areas? Are there issues specific to staff from overseas? How are internationally recruited staff represented at all levels in your workforce? What is their experience of harassment, bullying or abuse?

● The NHS Staff Survey data 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 latest Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) report 2022 highlights the experience of black and minority ethnic (BME) people working in the NHS (which may include 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. It allows the employee to self-report their reason for leaving and state what, if anything, would have kept them in the organisation.

- 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 in order to improve the experience of existing and future international staff.

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.

The NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework includes a diagnostic tool to self-assess your organisation and provides guidance on how

organisations can understand what good health and wellbeing looks like and what can be achieved.

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 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')

4. 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')

5. We acknowledge the depth of experience that international colleagues 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.