

Pillar one: Creating strong foundations

The first pillar focuses on creating strong foundations in the months before your new recruits arrive in the UK. First impressions are important for anyone starting a new job, but consider how internationally recruited colleagues might feel as they prepare to leave behind friends and family, familiar surroundings, language, and cultures to start a new life in a different country.

Review your recruitment timeline to consider where and when your organisation can offer support. The [International Recruitment Toolkit](#) contains a useful recruitment timeline for overseas nurse and midwife recruitment and overseas doctors.

As well as the support you offer locally, diaspora groups can also provide the pastoral and professional support your international nurses and midwives will need.

A list of diaspora groups can be found in the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#) and can be shared with your new recruits so they can find out about the support available to them before they arrive.

How to create strong foundations



For international staff

Maintaining contact

You should engage with new recruits early and often. This could include a one-to-one pre-arrival welcome call to get to know them personally, identify what support they may need, and to introduce them to key colleagues they will be working with. Getting to know their reasons for coming to work in the UK at this stage will help to support their personal and professional development, build trust and their attachment to their job, team, organisation, and the life they are seeking in the UK.

Welcome packs

It is good practice to provide your new recruits with a welcome pack. These can be shared prior to arrival and could include information about the UK, the organisation, local area and dialect, how to register with a GP and emergency contacts (including information for if things go wrong). You can also include details of staff networks, diaspora groups and how your new recruits can access support if they observe or experience bullying or harassment or need support with their own health and wellbeing.

Go to the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#) to use our welcome pack checklist.

Map skillsets and qualification

[Research](#) shows 78 per cent of international nurses had been qualified for over five years, and nearly half (48 per cent) had been qualified for more than ten years prior to migrating. On joining the NHS, many are placed on the first pay band for registered nurses and assigned to work in areas overlooking prior skills and experience. [A University of Huddersfield study](#) of international nurses' experience shares how acknowledging previous expertise would improve their experiences of working and living in England.

It is important to consider the number of years an internationally recruited colleague has been qualified as part of your recruitment process and where possible, to take this into account with their starting salary as per the guidance in the NHS terms and conditions of service handbook. Meet with them to understand the skills and experience they have gained from working in international healthcare settings. Placing them in their preferred clinical area acknowledges their experience and will support their growth and help them feel valued. If this isn't possible, open and honest discussions about next steps and the possibility of internal transfers should be initiated.

Furthermore, encouraging mutual learning by understanding prior experience and approaches to healthcare used around the world enhances integration and collaboration within teams.

Cost of living

[The University of Huddersfield study](#) of international nurses' experience of working and living in England describes feelings of surprise or shock at the [cost of living](#) related to tax, rising inflation and the cost of fuel and food. Consider providing short-term solutions such as discounts and vouchers or subsidised food. Providing long-term solutions through your employment package can provide stability, reassurance, shows your commitment and will contribute to retaining valuable talent.

Accommodation

It can be complex and challenging for new recruits to independently find suitable and affordable housing. Consider your local accommodation offer and/or work as a system to find suitable accommodation for people

before they arrive. Some organisations with limited accommodation have found it beneficial to make links with local university accommodation providers.

Internally, engage with staff to find out if any can offer a spare room in their home. Those who can help may be eligible for the government's rent-a-room scheme, which lets people earn up to £7,500 per year tax free from letting out furnished accommodation in their home.

Motivations for migration

NHS Employers · Ruby Reason For Migrating

For leaders, managers and the wider workforce

Manager guide

A managers' guide can help to prepare managers and team members for working with overseas staff and can include information that will help your new recruits transition smoothly into their new roles. Take a look at the Managers Guide for Overseas Nurses produced by the Capital Nurse international recruitment consortium. You might find it a helpful resource to support the objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) preparation and pastoral support of your international nurses.

Engage existing staff

Encourage your existing international staff to share their lived experience of relocating to the UK with new recruits. They will also have a unique understanding of the support new recruits may need to adapt to the cultural and working differences of the NHS and can provide you with key insights as you develop your support offer.

Acknowledging previous experience

NHS Employers · Mark Acknowledging Previous Experience

Good practice examples

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) starts the onboarding process for new international medical graduates (IMGs) before they arrive in the UK. A dedicated HR team meets with them virtually to discuss their expectations about working in the UK, travel options and to troubleshoot any queries they have. A peer buddy is also assigned to welcome and support the new IMG at this early stage.

On arrival, MFT ensures new IMGs are integrated well into the organisation and the local community. To help settle them into their new department,

education supervisors and mentors who have been specifically trained by the trust to support and supervise IMGs are assigned and their peer buddy continues to support them as they settle into life in the UK. Once the IMGs have settled in their department, enhanced career support guidance and dedicated training days are provided. The induction extends beyond the initial two-day induction and weekly half day sessions are run for three months to further enhance the onboarding experience. MFT has also developed a network of IMG and locally employed doctors (LED) representatives which are a bridge between senior clinical leaders, educators, managers and the wider trainee workforce to improve communication, engagement and morale. They provide live feedback and can voice any concerns directly to the medical staffing, Guardian of Safe Working and British Medical Association (BMA) representatives at the junior doctor's forum and the local negotiating committee (LNC). To support all of this activity, MFT has a dedicated postgraduate team hub to support LEDs and IMGs in the organisation and has developed a bespoke online SharePoint platform, an online hub which provides guidance, policies, information and resources in one easily accessible place for IMGs and LEDs.

West Yorkshire Allied Health Professional Faculty

West Yorkshire Allied Health Professional (AHP) Faculty has developed a manager's guide which sets out the recruitment process (including Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registration) and information that managers can share with new international AHP recruits to support them when they arrive in the UK. A welcome booklet has also been developed with international recruits who have previously migrated to the UK to provide information a new recruit may need to prepare them for the first few weeks of living in the UK. This includes information on accommodation, opening a bank account and accessing nearby facilities. To support their transition, a booklet designed by dietetic students at the University of Teesside on British cuisine is also shared to raise awareness of the British diet and cultural food stores in West Yorkshire. A pastoral lead for international AHPs works across the system to ensure international AHPs and managers are supported. See this [housing webinar](#)

for international AHPs in West Yorkshire for an example of the support offered by the faculty.

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust provides 12-weeks free accommodation to internationally educated nurses. By building a relationship with Leeds University, student accommodation is used to house them during this 12-week period. This accommodation is within reach of local transport, making it easy for internationally educated nurses to attend the OSCE training centre, supermarkets, town centre and places of worship. To manage expectations, the moving out date is shared with the nurses before their arrival. To support them to find longer term accommodation, the trust proactively shares rental guides, local agent's information, and rental prices in different areas of the city but acknowledges that housing has become a real challenge. The trust's international recruitment team supports them to find accommodation online and books viewings. Internationally educated nurses are allotted time for viewings and guided on how to get a house quickly. The team also accompanies them to house viewings, shares information on bills, taxes and provides employer references. It also helps to share the address details of where the nurses will be based so they can begin looking for accommodation near that base as soon as possible.

University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

The University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust (UHB) was awarded the Best International Recruitment Experience award at the Nursing Times Workforce Summit and Awards 2022. The trust considers each candidate's CV and full months of registered nursing experience to determine their starting salary. The interview and selection panels are pooled to reduce unconscious bias, and candidates are appointed to a practice setting based on their skills, knowledge, and post-registration experience. Candidates can request certain sites as the trust recognises that many have friends and family in the West Midlands. After completing the OSCE or adaptation programme all applicants are enrolled in UHB's

preceptorship programme and can apply for the accelerated development programme for internationally educated staff. The School of Nursing, AHPs, and midwifery teams deliver bespoke specialty-based training in the practice setting, along with access to external education via apprenticeships and higher education. The preparation programme is six weeks from UK arrival, and candidates do not start in their practice setting until their seventh week in the UK. This allows for a supportive induction to both the NHS and a pastoral and cultural integrated support programme. Five out of eight of the OSCE preparation team are internationally educated nurses, and the administration team and pastoral officers are all colleagues who were originally from outside the UK, making the team very representative. The trust works closely with the other four NHS providers in the ICS to pool resources, share good practice and quality assure processes. By December 2023, the team delivered the programme to 651 new employees.

Surrey Heartlands

Through effective ICS working, Surrey Heartlands identified that affordable accommodation was one of the key barriers to access for international nurses and launched a pilot project in July 2022 using an online platform designed to improve access of international nurses to affordable accommodation. Staff at Surrey Heartlands can advertise spare rooms available for rent in their property, with room prices capped below the area average to ensure affordability. As of February 2023, the pilot has provided affordable accommodation for 112 nights and continues to grow. The next phase of the project is to launch a free mobile app designed to increase the access of international nurses in Surrey Heartlands to pastoral, bespoke coaching, mentoring, mental and psychological support, signposting to affordable accommodations and services and information to support integration and improve personal sense of belonging in the workplace.

Tools and further reading

- This NHS Employers [Working and Training in the NHS Guide](#) can be shared with IMGs as part of your recruitment and induction material.
- See NHS England's [tools to support managers with onboarding international AHPs](#) and NHS Employers' [page of useful resources](#) to support international AHPs.
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy provides [professional support and information](#) for internationally trained physiotherapists about working in the UK.
- The Royal College of Occupational Therapy has an [international recruitment hub](#) to enable good practices and processes for international recruitment of occupational therapists.
- The British Dietetic Association [has information](#) for employers and overseas applicants who have undertaken recognised training in nutrition and dietetics outside the UK.
- [This NHS Employers page](#) provides a collection of national resources and guidance to support your international nurses and midwives.
- The overseas nurses and midwife recruitment section of the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#) has further information on UK professional registration requirements.
- UK ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) is the designated national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. NHS trusts in England can register two staff per trust who will be able to check staff member's international certificate/s through ENIC. To register up to two members of staff to use the service please email england.nhsapprenticeships@nhs.net.
- NHS Employers cost of living hub draws together resources and good practice to support employees with the rising cost of living. NHS England also provides resources and signposting to support colleagues with [financial wellbeing](#).
- For information on the registration process and associated timescales of the relevant professional regulator see the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#).
- For further information on repayment clauses should your international recruits decide to leave employment early, please see the [International Recruitment Toolkit](#).

How will you play your part?

Reflect on what you have read and consider how you or your team will play your part.
I/we will...