

Your audience

The audience you can inspire, attract and recruit from is vast. From school children and students in higher education, those already employed in other industries and sectors, to ex-Armed Forces personnel and your local community, it is worthwhile engaging as widely as possible. Our routes into the NHS infographic provides a useful visual of the different entry points in the NHS. We also have a helpful resource that presents the routes into midwifery.

Understand and communicate with different generations

Your attraction and recruitment strategy needs to be enticing to all. While the principles of good employment apply across all generations, there are different techniques you can use to make sure your offer is communicated as widely as possible.

Using a mixture of communication channels enables you to reach a broad audience of different ages and backgrounds to maximise your reach to potential new employees.

People want to feel engaged in their work and it's worthwhile considering that one of the key factors affecting engagement is the degree in which staff feel valued and recognised by the organisation they work for and the people they work with. Our case study on West London NHS Trust looks at how the trust developed its approach to recognition, in order to improve staff morale and and retention.

How do you communicate to your audience?

Have you considered that each generation has their own preferred communication channels?

Have you harnessed the skills and experience of your communications colleagues?

Is your recruitment part of a wider external communication strategy?

What skilled staff are looking for

Workforce shortages are seen across many professions. With nursing, medical and some allied health vacancies at record highs, have you thought about what professionals are looking for in a role and what is likely to make them stay?

Many organisations carry out stay interviews to better understand why current employees work in the organisation and what might cause them to leave. These can take place periodically either in an informal or formal setting and managers should feedback key themes, so the data can be used to inform initiatives to aid retention.

Another tool you have available to you is the annual staff survey. Read our latest briefing which looks at how to understand and use your survey data, in particular to identify workforce related issues and trends.

Do you know what your staff would like from your employment offer?

How do you use this to inform your future recruitment?

Return to practice

It's worth considering who in your local community may be eligible to return to practice and the national schemes available to help you attract and recruit from these groups.

Nurses and midwives

Information for qualified nurses and midwives who have taken a break from their careers and wish to return can be found on the Health Careers website.

For nurses and midwives wishing to re-join the register, the Nursing and Midwifery Council has a list of approved programmes available on their website.

Allied health professionals and healthcare scientists

Health Education England runs a programme designed to provide individuals with help and information should they wish to return to their allied health or healthcare scientist profession. The programme has a suite of resources including case studies, leaflets, posters, banners and videos designed to help employers promote healthcare science or allied health roles.

You can also read examples of NHS organisations that have implemented apprenticeship pathways in allied health professions and how it is enhancing workforce supply.

Retirees

For individuals who have retired and now claim their pension, the government's retire and return programme has many benefits for both employers and those seeking employment again, including:

- improved health and wellbeing of retired workers who wish to continue in their careers
- support for staff who are gradually transitioning from employment to retirement.

Our flexible retirement hub brings together advice and resources to help organisations and employees consider the range of options available. The hub includes the benefits of flexible retirement, what others are doing, and guidance to aid implementation. Flexible retirement is an excellent retention tool and should be used for both existing staff and retirees who wish to return. Our retirement flexibilities poster explains the different options available to NHS Pension Scheme members.

Read our flexible retirement guide which focuses on supporting nurses to access flexible retirement. It outlines the benefits of flexible retirement and showcases what it can look like in practice.

School children and students

If you ask young people about careers in the NHS, many will be able to tell you about nurses and doctors, but few know of the wide range of opportunities available.

The NHS consists of many exciting careers. The Health Careers chapter of this toolkit has a range of information about nationally led activities available and how you can use these to actively engage with, educate, inspire and support the young workforce of the future.

For example, read how Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust worked in partnership with its local college to offer 45-day work placements for BTEC health and social care students.

The Health Careers website lists a number of facilities around the country that allow school and college students the opportunity to see what it's like to work for the NHS.

It's also worth considering students including those who may not have considered a career in the NHS, but who find themselves in the university clearing process (available from July to September each year).

Shared learning from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust opened the Learning Inspiration for Future Employment (LIFE) centre in April 2018. The centre aims to educate and inspire people from aged five and above about the various NHS careers available, from doctors and nurses to porters and engineers. The Life Centre is fully equipped with interactive classrooms, a clinical zone and a mock ward area. It is free for NHS organisations and public funded education providers to use to deliver sessions.

Local community

Recruiting from your local community and being inclusive in your recruitment can be hugely beneficial in helping you tackle your supply challenges. By making sure your recruitment is visible, open and accessible, your teams will be more innovative and creative.

A potential talent pool of candidates, who could be underrepresented in your current workforce, lies within your local community. It's worth considering how your organisation can engage with, attract and employ from this pool. Ex-offenders, care leavers (those who have been in care), refugees, ex-military, and those who have experienced homelessness are just some examples.

Inclusive recruitment

Our inclusive recruitment podcast series features interviews with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and a senior manager at NHS England and Improvement. They share their experiences of inclusive recruitment practice, how they have made their processes inclusive and the benefits they have seen by doing so.

Apprenticeships

From 11 January 2022, employers will be able to apply for a payment of £3,000 for apprentices with an employment start date from 1 October 2021 to 31 January 2022. Applications close on 15 May 2022. Read more on the government's apprenticeship pages.

£126 million of new money was announced in the March 2021 budget to triple traineeships. Both can help you attract new talent that may not have come through via traditional education routes.

Since the start of the pandemic 189,000 more young people have become economically inactive. The Youth Employment census report told how young people 'do not feel confident that there are good opportunities where they live.' This provides further incentive for NHS organisations to become anchor institutions and use apprenticeship and traineeship funding to help grow the economy in local areas.

Apprenticeships and traineeships can be used to provide development opportunities for existing staff as well as tackle skills shortages across roles.

They offer many benefits to your organisation, which include:

- opportunities for all
- a channel to recruit a diverse workforce
- improved retention rates.

The NHS offers a wide range of apprenticeships and in the 2020/21 financial year 37,500 people started careers in the health service via an apprenticeship. Watch our webinar to see how employers are using apprenticeships to help attract, develop and retain staff.

Find out more about apprenticeships and traineeships in our web section.

T Levels

T Levels are two-year, technical programmes designed with employers, to give young people the skills that industries need. They are available to 16 to 18-year olds as a technical alternative to A levels. One T Level programme is the equivalent to 3 A levels and T Levels come in a range of topics including health and science, digital and business.

T Level qualifications include an industry placement for a minimum of 45 days over two years. They prepare young people to join the health sector with skills and knowledge that can be used in a range of entry-level roles, and allow employers to showcase the breadth and depth of roles available in the NHS, including shortage occupations and hard to fill roles. T Levels can be beneficial to employers as they allow you to tap into two new talent pools – those that know they want to work in health and science but haven't yet picked an occupation in which to specialise, and those that might not have considered the NHS as a business, IT, or childcare employer for example.

Employers can claim £1,000 per T Level student that they host on an industry placement between 27 May 2021 and 31 July 2022. Additional information on funding can be found [here](#).

Find out more about T-Levels, and read how Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has used the qualification in practice.

The Armed Forces community

There are approximately 900,000 working age veterans in the UK and 14,000 leave the Armed Forces each year. Many of these individuals are job ready and contribute to a pool of staff your organisation can tap into. Armed Forces personnel undergo extensive training and development which leads to a wide range of qualifications and transferable skills, combined with values that are closely aligned to the NHS.

Step into Health is a programme that connects employers in the NHS with the Armed Forces community. Organisations pledge to the programme and enhance their recruitment processes to make them more accessible to this talented pool of candidates. Step into Health-pledged organisations also have access to an online candidate system where they can get in touch with interested candidates. Find out more about the programme and what it can offer on the campaign homepage.

Shared learning from Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has led the Surrey and Heartland Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) to sign up to Step into Health as a collaborative. The STP has jointly funded a new project lead role who will coordinate all the activity between the 11 health and social care organisations in the footprint. This collaborative approach allows each employer to benefit from the relationships built and will expand their reach to the Armed Forces community, increasing the talent pool to recruit from.

Overseas candidates

Overseas recruitment has made a valuable contribution to the NHS over recent years. The NHS People Plan underlines the importance of ethical international recruitment as an important element of NHS workforce supply alongside other longer-term domestic education and training solutions.

If you haven't already, it's worthwhile considering how you can help your overseas professionals to meet the necessary requirements and prepare them to come to the UK.

HEE has developed a series of videos which aims to familiarise overseas individuals with clinical environments, and offers some insights and orientations to simulation-based clinical scenarios.

Find information and guidance on the international recruitment section of the website. Here you will also find our interactive international recruitment toolkit, designed to help employers effectively plan and ethically recruit from overseas.

Employers should also familiarise themselves with the UK Code of Practice which promotes high standards of practice in the international recruitment and employment of healthcare professionals.

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust pre-employment programmes enable you to provide a route into work for local young people who live in your community. It supports employers by providing the pre-employment programmes: Get Into, a four-week programme of placement and training; and Get Started, a two to three day intensive programme of placement, employability skills training, and interviews for entry-level vacancies.

Examples of trusts who have successfully worked in partnership with the Prince's Trust to create employment opportunities include South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust which designed pre-employment programmes tailor-made to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to work in the organisation.

We spoke to The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and The Prince's Trust to learn about the value of their partnership and what makes it work so well. The partnership has created a number of job opportunities for young people in the community.

The Prince's Trust also offers one-to-one mentoring support for delegates for up to six months after completion of the programme. For details and resources see our Prince's Trust web page.

Our retain and recruit toolkit is another useful resource to help you employ young people. It explores the different stages of the recruitment journey and how they can be adapted for young people.

On Tuesday 1 March 2022, NHS Employers, in partnerships with The Prince's Trust and Health Education England, brought together a range of expert speakers who shared their research and experience of working with young people. Further information and resources from this conference are available on this conference highlights web page.

Inspire top tips

- Identify your organisation's unique selling points and hone in on these in your recruitment materials.
- Assess how your organisation communicates its employment offer to prospective staff. Using a varied range of communication techniques can help ensure your offer is communicated as widely as possible.
- Understand what your existing staff like about working in your organisation and what things may cause them to leave. You can do this by carrying out 'stay' and 'exit' interviews.
- Use national schemes to help you design your retire and return offer. This can help you retain the expertise of experienced staff for longer.
- Partner with local schools and colleges. By actively engaging with these institutions you can help inspire a future workforce.
- Ensure your recruitment is visible, open and accessible. This will help you to access all the talent in your local community and recruit more widely.

