

**Inspire, Attract and Recruit
toolkit: Resources and
guidance to support your
workforce supply**

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Introduction

As the world's fifth largest employer, workforce supply is a top priority for the NHS. Despite its 1.2 million staff in England (1.7 million including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), staffing shortages across some professions exist, which impacts on the delivery of essential services.

The UK government has pledged to have 50,000 more nurses in the NHS by 2024/25 and rapidly increasing the pace of recruitment across all roles and professions is a key focus of the We are the NHS: People Plan.

NHS England has published two workforce plans to support the aims of the NHS People Plan:

- The NHS Estates and Facilities workforce action plan sets out how it intends to fulfil those ambitions for the estates and facilities workforce across England over the next ten years.
- The Allied Health Professions (AHPs) strategy aims to support the AHP community working in a variety of health and care sectors to continually improve and redesign services.

As the UK economy continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the NHS must ensure that health and care remains an attractive and accessible sector for local talent. It is crucial for organisations to develop relationships with education providers, influence the skills agenda and ensure visibility as a good employer within the local community.

It takes time and investment to grow new talent. This toolkit will help you as you take stock of what you might want to do now, to ensure you are able to sustain your workforce pipeline. To give you an overview of the types of information and good practice examples you will find in this toolkit, watch a recording of our inspire, attract and recruit webinar. In this session we ran through the toolkit's contents and shared good practice examples under the headings inspire, attract and recruit.

Inspire

Anchor institutions

An anchor institution is a large organisation that supports the health and wellbeing of its local population through, for example, good employment opportunities and inclusive recruitment practices.

NHS organisations are anchor institutions and can play an important role in the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, six NHS organisations were awarded funding to implement and test projects that aim to embed anchor practices and tackle health inequalities in their local areas.

Throughout this toolkit we refer to anchor institutions, and implementing the good practice contained here will help your organisation further establish itself in this role.

Suggested further reading on the subject includes The King's Fund and The Health Foundation.

Your staffing pipeline includes trainees, new graduates, those returning to practice and overseas candidates. Reducing net migration continues to be high on the government's agenda and as the country continues to feel the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that organisations strengthen local strategies to enhance domestic supply routes and continue to be an employer of choice. A focus on widening participation and tapping into programmes such as Step into Health will help you become an anchor institution within your communities.

Your existing organisational workforce data will help to show what is happening, for example high turnover, and identify areas for improvement. This then needs to be considered and understood both at an organisational and team level to help inform future improvement activities.

Evaluation

Continual improvement of any practice requires ongoing evaluation and it is worthwhile building this into your recruitment activity from the beginning, considering what elements you want to regularly measure and how this can help improve your future activity.

Questions to consider:

Do you understand your trust vacancy rate data?

Do you have opportunities to plan across your local health system to understand and manage risk?

What's your organisational workforce plan for the next few years and beyond?

Labour market trends and competition

While helpful to look at national workforce trends, it is important you understand your own local workforce profile and patterns, and how this can impact recruitment.

In a competitive market, you should also consider the unique selling points your organisation has over other sectors, such as staff rights to request

flexible working from day one of their employment. Understanding why candidates are choosing to work in other sectors will also help your organisation adapt in a competitive market.

The NHS is often the largest employer in a local community. Does all of your community see you as an employer for them?

The most recent Labour market overview report shows that job turnover remains well above pre-pandemic levels and may even be rising. This is likely to be fuelling record numbers of vacancies and labour shortages as organisations struggle to backfill posts from the (lessening) numbers of who are out of work, looking for and ready to work. Our supporting economic recovery briefing highlights the impact of COVID-19 and the role the NHS can play in supporting local recovery.

Our labour market trends (2022) resource looks at the recent shifts in both local and national labour markets, and how this impacts on recruitment and retention in the NHS. The briefing shares key statistics, provides context around the importance of UK labour market trends, signposts employers to available support, and encourages you to consider how to prepare your responses to current trends with both short and long-term solutions.

Workforce redesign

Workforce redesign is about seeking new ways of working for your existing staff to develop their current skills and gain support in building resilience and confidence; meeting the needs of new organisational systems and processes to improve patient care.

Visit our workforce redesign webpage for examples and benefits of workforce design, as well as resources to help you plan and develop workforce redesign ideas.

Read how the University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust increased their trainee nursing associate apprenticeships and developed a strategy that could be replicated across the Devon Integrated Care System.

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 helpful resources that present the routes into nursing and 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.

NHS England has published a new nursing and midwifery retention tool to support staff to deliver high quality care, enhancing job satisfaction and supporting the retention of nurses and midwives. The self-assessment tool can be used by anyone responsible for the retention of nurses and midwives. NHS England recommends completing the tool alongside your nurses and midwifery retention steering group or equivalent, and involving a wide range of colleagues.

The 2021 staff survey results indicate the need for continued investment in workforce supply to increase staff numbers, a focus on improving health and wellbeing, and reducing bullying and harassment.

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. Read our guidance on return to practice for healthcare professionals.

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 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:

- retention of valuable skills and NHS knowledge
- 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.

Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has committed to being a flexible employer. The trust has developed and promoted flexible working across the trust and has implemented nine key flexible working enablers.

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. Good practice examples can be found in the recruiting from your local community resource page.

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.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust and local charity Growing Points collaborated on the Hidden Talents project, aimed at helping people from disadvantaged backgrounds, principally refugees and asylum seekers,

Have you considered how to combine your local community engagement opportunities with career promotion?

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

The government has published the latest rules for apprenticeship funding (2022-2023) in England. The updated rules will apply to apprenticeships starting between 1 August 2022 and 31 July 2023.

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, how to get started with industry placements and read how Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust have successfully implemented T-Levels placements.

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.

Take a look at our Armed Forces Reservists toolkit which offers practical guidance to managers in NHS trusts to understand and develop a structure of support that can be offered to reservists in the workforce.

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.

Our webinar recording showcases examples of real-life initiatives from NHS trusts supporting overseas nurses to band 5 roles and beyond.

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.

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.
 - Offer apprenticeships, traineeships and pre-employment programmes as alternative access routes into your organisation.
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Attract

Attracting staff in a competitive environment during a digital revolution can feel overwhelming. It can be confusing what methods of recruitment best suit your organisation and difficult to stay ahead of emerging trends.

From profession-specific videos shared on social media, to hospital open evenings and celebratory events, there is lots that can be done to raise the profile of your organisation and the career opportunities on offer.

In this section you can find a range of attraction methods along with resources and leading examples.

NHS Employers facilitates a recruitment exchange network for recruitment leads in the NHS. The network is a space for recruitment and resourcing managers in the NHS to share challenges and solutions with one another, test ideas and form a virtual support group. This network predominantly focuses on domestic recruitment and improving recruitment processes. You can request to join the network by emailing workforcesupply@nhsemployers.org.

In 2022 NHS Employers Workforce Supply virtual conference focused on supporting talent pipelines in the NHS. Speakers shared good practice and experience to help support supply and retention of the workforce. The content from the conference can be accessed on our website.

The results for the Northeast and Yorkshire healthcare support worker recruitment and retention survey 2021/22 were recently published. Intelligence from the survey aims to support employers to ensure their recruitment practices and induction encourages HCSWs to remain in the NHS, advocate for their trust as an employer of choice in the local community, and potentially consider a nursing career. You can also view our visual summary and analysis for this.

NHS England also has a collection of good practice case studies on recruiting HCSWs on the HCSW Future NHS collaboration platform.

We are the NHS

We are the NHS is a national recruitment campaign run by NHS England. Images and videos to support your recruitment activities are available to use and download on the campaign hub.



How is your trust perceived by your local community and beyond?
Is there more that than can be done to improve the reputation of your organisation?

Being a leading employer

To compete for talent in your local community, your organisation will need to be visible. When attracting the best candidates, you need to be able to separate your organisation from the rest. Jobseekers are no different to any other consumer – they are looking for the best deal. We know this means different things for different people, so it's important to know your audience.

From a good reputation and culture, a strong health and wellbeing approach, to communicating your reward package effectively, individuals need to understand what is available to them both within the organisation and in the local area such as schools and transport links. Having a strong employer brand is incredibly important in a competitive environment.

The benefits of a strong employer brand include:

- increased awareness of your organisation and vacancies
- enhanced image in the local community and beyond
- reduced recruitment costs
- pride amongst your staff
- improved retention rates.

Read our case study on the innovative approach taken by King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. They partnered with a recruitment agency to create an award winning recruitment campaign built on extensive staff engagement which put King's staff at the front and centre of their campaign.

Shared learning from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) has an engagement project that is committed to improving the employee journey. Their dedicated careers website forms part one of their journey, acting as more than just a jobs board by describing 'The Leeds Way' through video employee profiles and interactive content. It showcases the city of Leeds, information on open evenings, work experience, volunteering and apprenticeships.

Other trusts with their own careers websites include West Midlands Ambulance Service, The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

Best of both worlds

Six employers in the Northamptonshire region, including NHS and private healthcare providers, a university and a healthcare charity, have developed the best of both worlds microsite as part of a campaign to attract new recruits to live and work in the area. On the microsite you can find information about each organisation, a list of their current vacancies as well as other key information on the local area such as housing, sports and entertainment.

Use social media

Correct use of social media can help you to strengthen your employer brand and attract quality talent to your organisation. Social media

may not even be actively searching but thinks of your organisation when they are ready for a career move.

According to Statista, a provider of market and consumer data, 71.64 per cent of the UK uses social media. USwitch also claims that the average UK citizen spends 109 minutes a day on social media.

The next generation of NHS staff will have grown up using platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. More NHS organisations than ever before are using these platforms, not only to recruit but to actively engage with the community to help inspire the future workforce.

Our social media tips resource has specific examples of how to attract and recruit young people into your organisation.

Read our case study on how Blood Cancer UK increased the diversity of applications by advertising jobs on LinkedIn. The case study explains how the organisation increased its reach and how it used the platform to showcase its organisational culture - something existing staff had said was a major positive in working for the organisation.

For other tips to help you get started, visit the [NHS Employers using social media in recruitment page](#).

Use your existing workforce

When thinking about attraction, your existing staff are ideally placed to talk about their careers, your organisation and why the NHS is a great place to work. They could even help you attract new candidates, including family members, to apply.

Health Education England runs a health ambassadors programme which encourages people studying and working in healthcare to volunteer one hour per year to speak in schools about their roles or take part in careers events.

Inspiring the Future has an online matchmaking platform to connect schools and colleges with appropriate volunteers from a range of sectors and professions that match their requirements. There are currently more than 41,000 volunteers registered, and your staff can join them to help inspire young people. If you'd like to share how it works, share this short video with your staff.

This report from the Nuffield Trust: Attracting more people into mental health nurse education, commissioned by NHS Employers and the Mental Health Network explores how we can attract more people, from a broad range of backgrounds, to study mental health nursing.

Shared learning from Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust has adapted its recruitment strategy to the digital era. With the use of a digital advertising agency, they built an effective social media platform to attract band 5 registered nurses and students to the organisation. Their Facebook campaign had an average audience of over 70,000 people each month which created a database of over 300 people who had interest in joining the trust. Through targeted messages and engaging content, the trust has nearly doubled the number of people attending events and increased the number of student nurses recruited each year.

Do you encourage your existing staff to spread the word and become health ambassadors within your organisation?

Could you use inspiring the future or other similar schemes to elevate the workforce?

Profession-specific videos

One way to help highlight your organisation to potential employees is by showcasing some of your current workforce. Here are some leading examples of trusts using videos and their staff to highlight the benefits of working for them.

Be a Greater Manchester Nurse

the nursing role and is inspired by artists from the area.

Aintree University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Aintree Hospital has produced a social media friendly and engaging video that features some of their nurses describing what it's like to work at the trust.

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust showcases why its nurses choose to develop their career at the trust in its Not Just a Job campaign.

Open days and events

Open days, recruitment fairs and exhibitions are a fantastic way to attract and inspire young people and the local community to think about a career in the NHS. You can set up a stall in your hospital foyer with your staff, who can share their career journeys and answer any questions.

Many trusts run open days during celebrations weeks such as Healthcare Science Week.

Recruitment fairs and exhibitions, such as the yearly Big Bang fair, is a fantastic way of targeting a big audience and promoting your

organisation as an employer of choice. Coordinate your attendance at these events with neighbouring health and social care organisations to prevent duplication and reduce resource allocations.

Celebratory weeks

Every year, dedicated healthcare celebrations and awareness weeks provide a fantastic opportunity for you to raise the profile of NHS careers.

One of these is Healthcare Science Week in March, when organisations across the country celebrate healthcare science and the various routes into the profession.

Find out what has taken place previously and how you can get involved in the next celebrations.

- Healthcare Science week
- National Apprenticeship week
- National Careers Week

View more days and events on our calendar of national campaigns.

Shared learning from Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust has built on its successful nursing open days with a new bus tour. Individuals are taken on a tour of three of the 108 trust sites, following a route designed to showcase what Leeds has to offer. Aimed specifically at first and second year nursing students, the tour aims to attract individuals into community nursing roles. The tour involves various interactive sessions and gives students the opportunity to speak to the preceptorship lead, newly qualified nurses and members of the multidisciplinary team.

Rotational roles are a great recruitment incentive, particularly for newly qualified staff who are keen to expand their skills, knowledge and experience. Rotational roles can be offered within an organisation or collaboratively across trusts in your region. Not only can they help you strengthen your employment offer, they also facilitate shared learning between departments and organisations, upskill staff and help with retention.

Internal transfer schemes

Offering staff routes to develop their careers in other parts of your organisation can be a great method for attracting and retaining your workforce. Often referred to as internal transfer schemes, these arrangements can allow staff to make a sideward move into a department they are interested in, allowing them to expand their knowledge, skills and experience – without the burden of re-applying for a role and going through a recruitment process.

"I have found that it's so beneficial to have knowledge from other areas and fresh ideas and new ways of working – it only enhances your nursing care."

Shared learning from Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust

As part of its preceptorship initiatives, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust has developed an 18-month to two year rotational programme for all band 5 nurses. The programme allows nurses to carry out either six or nine-month placements within different areas to give them opportunities to expand their knowledge and experience within different areas of nursing. Nurses can consider different roles, matching potential career pathways with their individual wants, needs and skillsets.

Flexible working

The UK workforce is now more diverse than ever, reflecting changes in society and demographics of the population. Flexible working opportunities and predictability of shifts can support the delivery of improved service outcomes, providing benefits for the organisation, individual and the patient. It can provide an attractive offer to staff, many of whom have varying commitments which can make it difficult working certain hours. By offering flexible working, you can attract a pool of applicants which may otherwise have not been attracted to roles in your organisation. We are aware that it may be difficult to offer flexible working patterns in certain circumstances. To help you work through common challenges, we have published a set of scenarios that offer potential barriers to flexible working and the solutions to these. In addition we have produced a mythbusting resource to further help with any issues.

Our flexible working guidance can help you to embed flexible working for nurses in your organisation.

Shared learning from Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a new flexi model which allows staff to have an annualised hours contract with greater flexibility in the number of hours they carry out each month. Members of staff will give their availability six weeks in advance and can be deployed to any site within their allocated zone. This model is an attractive package for staff and gives them the opportunity to have a stable monthly income. The trust has already seen improvements in retention and provides consistency in the continuity of care for patients.

Communicate reward and recognition

Communicating the whole reward package is a key part of recruitment. Our webpage and infographic show how using the right technology can help you promote the benefits of working for your organisation to potential new employees and existing staff. You can also use our reward communications guide to help you plan and communicate your organisations' reward package to staff. Line managers also play an important role in communicating reward benefits to staff, our webpage provides ways to involve them in developing your reward strategy.

Our Total Reward Engagement Network (TREN) brings together NHS colleagues, with an interest in reward, to share knowledge and experience. Joining TREN can help you to develop your local reward package and strategy by gaining inspiration and ideas from other organisations. For example read about the major benefits Sherwood

Forest NHS Foundation Trust saw from using their benefits package as a key part of their recruitment and retention campaign.

reward offer for NHS employees. It is a valuable recruitment and retention tool for employers to use.

Our NHS Pension Scheme poster communicates the value of the scheme and shows six of the key features that staff told us are most important to them. Including the poster in job adverts is an easy visual way to promote the scheme benefits to potential new employees. Use the resource to support your conversations with staff about pensions and to help you explain the benefits of being a member of the scheme. Our benefit leaflet template is also useful for designing a leaflet to showcase and promote your reward offer.

For line managers wanting further support with communicating their organisation's offer we have created a resource page and template to help with this.

Find more reward resources and how to develop a reward strategy on the NHS Employers website.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust used reward within its recruitment strategy to ease workforce supply pressures and reduce vacancy rates. They used several approaches which included recommend a friend, supporting staff in relocation, recognising achievements and promoting their reward offer on NHS jobs which has resulted in a four per cent reduction in nursing vacancies and a reduction in staff turnover.

Awards for recognition

Have you considered using an award scheme? Leeds Teaching Hospital Foundation Trust have introduced award programmes to recognise their staff. Read Katy Mallender-Ward's blog to find out more.

Careers resources

The Health Careers service provides an inclusive hub of NHS career information about the 350+ opportunities available, along with useful resources including infographics and posters to help employers inspire the future workforce.

Health Careers also runs an annual Step into the NHS campaign which provides 12-14-year olds with careers information as part of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. They can also support you to offer work experience to people from underrepresented communities. Access their smart guide.

Career navigation

In Kent, Surrey and Sussex (KSS), career navigator roles are being developed to support unsuccessful clinical and nonclinical support worker applicants across health and social care. The roles, funded by Health Education England KSS, has been designed to maintain applicant interest in these careers and support them to gain the skills and knowledge required to fulfil the roles.

The navigators will spend time with the individuals to determine why they were unsuccessful and then engage with them to offer support and put in place any intervention required such as coaching, training or personal development.

What do you do to support applicants?

Is providing support something that might be valuable in your organisation?

Why not start the conversation with your senior leadership team?

Employability programmes

Employability programmes support individuals to help them secure employment. Many people who are unemployed face difficulties and barriers when seeking employment. The reasons for this are quite complex and might include:

- negative work experiences and lack of recent work
- out-of-date core employability skills
- stigma around mental health.

Find out about the approach Birmingham Children’s Hospital has taken to supporting young people on their career journeys in its Aspire programme.

Shared learning: Norfolk and Waveney Health and Care Partnership (ICB)

Read our case study about how NHS organisations in Norfolk have teamed up with Next Gen Health & Care to offer packages of employment support for young candidates.

Personalised pre-employment support contributes to an improved experience for candidates and helps them to be better prepared for the recruitment process.

Attraction top tips

1. Ensure your website is engaging and provides individuals with up to date, concise and inspiring information about your organisation and this surrounding area.
2. Provide clear information on the various opportunities and routes into your organisation.
3. Consider an employability programme and how you can support people into your organisation.

5. Use social media to promote your organisation and inform the community about open days, recruitment opportunities and how individuals, schools, colleges and universities can get involved.
 6. Consider creating engaging resources to inspire your audience such as profession-specific videos which describe the career journey and inspire people to work for you.
 7. Encourage your current staff to spread the word about the NHS and the range of opportunities available.
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Recruit

Recruiting is much more than writing job descriptions, interviewing and carrying out pre-employment checks. Each step is as important as the next and it requires planning, clear processes and agreed timescales.

Have you looked at previous exercises and taken feedback into account? Of those interviewed and made appointable how many took up post? How long did the process take and if they didn't end up starting in role, do you know why? A review of this can help you identify any areas for improvement and prevent this pre-start attrition.

Recruitment needs to centre around a positive candidate experience. It needs to provide all potential employees with a quick and easy route to finding a vacancy and applying, which swiftly leads to a stimulating and fulfilling interview with an appointment offer, or notice made as soon as possible if they've been unsuccessful. This streamlined approach helps to ensure potential recruits feel engaged, motivated to continue with their application, aren't side tracked by another offer and have the confidence to re-apply once ready.

When a potential recruit spots your vacancy, ideally you want them to find out more about your organisation. Having your own careers website which is engaging, informative and enticing is key. Scroll to the advertising chapter of the toolkit to find out more.

It is also important to consider that many people search and often apply for vacancies using mobile technology. Studies by Glassdoor suggest that without mobile access, you could cut out nearly half of your potential candidates.

Positive action and accessible recruitment

Taking positive action during the recruitment process can enable you to diversify your workforce, and deliver against actions in the NHS People Plan, Workforce Race Equality Standard and the Workforce Disability Equality Standard.

The government's Equality act 2010: what do I need to know? A quick start guide to using positive action in recruitment and promotion states: "positive action provisions mean that it is not unlawful to recruit or promote a candidate who is of equal merit to another candidate, if the employer reasonably thinks the candidate:

- has a protected characteristic that is underrepresented in the workforce; or
- that people with that characteristic suffer a disadvantage connected to that characteristic.

However, positive action does not allow an employer to appoint a less suitable candidate just because that candidate has a protected characteristic that is under-represented or disadvantaged."

Protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (or lack of), sex, and sexual orientation.

Most fundamentally positive action can support employers under the Equality Act 2010 to recruit and promote people from underrepresented groups to help them overcome disadvantages in competing with other applicants.

The government's positive action in recruitment guide outlines all of the steps throughout the recruitment process where positive action can be taken and includes examples of tie-break scenarios. Your recruitment team can also provide you with data throughout the recruitment process about the protected characteristics of applicants, to

support you with taking positive action during the process, or to understand where barriers in the process may occur.

Ensure that your recruitment processes are accessible to all too. Ask whether reasonable adjustments are required and if so provide them. This may be including hearing loops, accessible software for any computer-based activity, a wheelchair accessible space for all activities, papers in large print and colour filters available.

Find out more about our equality, diversity and inclusion programme and access our toolkit to help you support, recruit and retain disabled staff into your organisation, and represent a diverse workforce that delivers high-quality patient care.

Writing your job descriptions and person specification

An effective, engaging and inclusive job description is key. It should outline your organisational values, trust mission and provide an accurate, interesting account of the skills and competencies required for the role. A good job description should provide clarity for the individual and the manager so it's important to get it right.

Ensuring your job descriptions are available in an accessible form is the easiest way to prevent putting off a potential candidate. It's important to use clear and simple language when describing the tasks that will need to be completed.

Advertising

How organisations advertise can impact recruitment and when competing with your neighbours for hard-to-fill posts, it is important you get your advertising right.

Where you post your vacancies can impact the levels of interest your vacancies receive. You have many advertising routes available to you including job websites such as the free NHS Jobs service. In addition, you can use your local Jobcentre Plus, radio, trade media outlets and social media to promote your trust's careers website.

It's important to think about your audience and tailor your adverts to suit. For example the ambulance service often use radio advertising to target their audience who are typically out on the road.

Values-based recruitment

Values-based recruitment (VBR) is an approach to help attract and select future employees whose personal values and behaviours align with the NHS values outlined in the NHS Constitution.

Our resources section hosts information about VBR, resources, toolkits and case studies. Find out how ready your organisation is for VBR by using our readiness toolkit.

Shared learning from York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals

York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust overhauled its consultant recruitment process to align it to the trust's values of kind, open and excellent, and to ensure the process worked in a virtual setting.

Read how the trust's approach gave them a fuller picture of candidates and allowed them to recruit comparable numbers of consultants, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Interviews and selection

Interviewing has evolved over the years and employers are using a variety of methods to make the process quicker, easier, more accessible and more variable, all of which enhance the candidate experience. COVID-19 has changed the way we work and virtual interviews and recruitment will certainly become more prevalent in the future.

Interviews can be conducted at open days and exhibition events giving candidates a quick and easy recruitment experience while also saving time and resource in your organisation. To help widen your pool of applicants and manage the interview process in a resourceful way, some employers are choosing to carry out video interviews using Skype, or in some cases, pre-recorded interview questions which allow individuals to be interviewed at a time which suits them.

Shared learning from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust has turned its assessment days into a one stop shop, ensuring a fast and effective process for both the candidate and the trust. By working collaboratively, it has streamlined the logistics of the day and can inform candidates of the many opportunities throughout the trust.

Shared learning from University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust has changed the way it recruits for healthcare assistant roles. Replacing the usual telephone interview with video interviewing, the team has saved time and resources, improving the efficiency of the recruitment process. Having the interview pre-recorded gives greater flexibility and allows multiple managers to be involved. The video interviews also benefit the applicant who can record their interview at a time and location that best suits them.

Recruit to retain

The first six months in a new role typically influences whether an employee stays for the long term, making induction and the onboarding process crucial.

An effective induction or period of preceptorship can help employees hit the ground running. Integrating staff into your organisation and setting out

Effective mentoring, senior support, structured appraisals and a supportive learning environment are all effective ways of supporting new starters and will help staff to be as productive as possible in their roles.

For further good practice on how you can support new starters and other items that can help you to retain your staff for longer, read our Improving staff retention guide.

You can also read our tips on how to streamline your recruitment process for young people and reduce the delay between job offer and start date.

Shared learning from Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's Start Well: Stay Well model engages new starters at various stages, including on appointment and before they arrive as part of the onboarding process. The initiative is being adopted and spread across the trust, ensuring all new staff attend a Start Well: Stay Well event and have access to a buddy.

Recruitment processes

Recruitment takes time but there are things employers can do to help speed it up and ensure your prospective employees feel engaged from start to finish.

Streamlining between trusts helps to deliver a quality and efficient recruitment experience which reduces duplication and unnecessary delays in getting the successful candidate started in the workplace. It involves organisations working collaboratively to embed and deliver consistency through HR best practice and includes joint working between professionals from the four key HR workstreams; occupational health, medical staffing, statutory and mandatory training and recruitment.

Efficient recruitment processes that centre around candidate experience can help you to expand your talent pool, recruit quicker and improve your employer brand.

Our recruitment processes pages provide guidance and examples from other NHS organisations on several topics that, done well, will help you improve the efficiency of your processes and keep you up to date with the latest trends in recruitment. These include:

- automating recruitment processes – the use of robotic process automation (RPA) to programme software to take care of routine, manual processes, freeing up staff to work on more value adding tasks.
- virtual recruitment – helping you identify key considerations to make before, during and after interview when recruiting remotely.
- trends in recruitment – this poster explores seven expected trends in recruitment in 2021, helping ensure you factor emerging trends into your recruitment strategy.

Pre-employment checks are an essential part of recruitment and it is important they are carried out as efficiently as possible to avoid any delays in individuals taking up post. NHS Employers provides practical information, toolkits and resources on the pre-employment check standards including shared learning which demonstrate how organisations have simplified checking processes without compromising standards and patient safety.

Reviewing recruitment top tips

- Set clear recruitment objectives and targets.
- Think about the evaluation methods available to you.
- Track your website analytics, social media reach, media coverage tools and surveys.
- Ensure you carry out stay and exit interviews and identify any trends.
- Use staff feedback to identify trends

Onboarding

New jobs are exciting but can also be a bit stressful for a new employee, so it is vital to consider the human factors that personally affect individuals during the first few months of beginning a new role.

Onboarding and induction done well can help you settle and retain the staff you've spent time and money recruiting. Get it wrong, and you could need to re-advertise and potentially damage your employer reputation.

Shared learning from Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

As part of its improving the employee journey project, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust (LTHT) has introduced an online onboarding system. On receipt of log-in details, successful candidates can access new starter forms and book their pre-employment check meeting. This has resulted in HR saving an average of 33 hours per year. New employees can access information and ask questions about their induction and future career at LTHT. The onboarding system has won the in-house recruitment award (2017 Best Onboarding Strategy) and was a finalist in the HPMA Innovation in HR award in 2018.

Shared learning from The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust

The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has introduced a postcard initiative that congratulates and welcomes new nursing recruits ahead of their start date. The postcards, costed at just 54 pence per staff member, are sent by both the chief nurse and lead nurse on their ward ahead of their start date. The initiative has been warmly welcomed by staff, making them feel 'valued and part of the team' even before they arrive.

How do you help to onboard your staff?

What have you learnt from previous onboarding?

Can feedback from your new recruits help inform improvements?