

Retention in the NHS: key facts, employer response and resources

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan: Routes into retention

The plan calls for NHS leaders to improve culture, leadership and wellbeing. This will help ensure fewer staff leave the NHS over the next 15 years. It includes a range of retention related actions including:

- build on the actions from the NHS People Plan, to make the [NHS People Promise](#) a reality for our staff
- work to deliver the actions set out in the [NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#)
- back plans to improve [flexible opportunities for prospective retirees](#) and work with the government to deliver the actions needed to modernise the NHS Pension Scheme
- ensure NHS organisations across the country, from day one of employment offer people [flexible working](#) and the best possible start to an NHS career and use tools such as “stay conversations” to keep them in the workforce
- commit to ongoing national funding for [continuing professional development](#) for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, so NHS staff are supported to meet their full potential
- encourage employers to innovative and work collaboratively and for ICS to support this.

Key retention challenges

- Staff shortages are a key obstacle to the delivery of patient care and improving staff experience.
- Turnover levels are at historically high levels, despite recent improvements.
- High turnover creates vacancies, putting pressure on staff and increasing costs.
- Growth in staff thinking of leaving (17 per cent) and in retiring at earlier career stage.
- Successful delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan depends on improved turnover levels over time.

Core areas for employers to consider



Culture and leadership

Leaders should embed a compassionate culture built on civility, respect and equal opportunity.



Flexible working

Boosting the flexibilities we offer our staff to work in ways that suit them and work for patients.



Wellbeing

Prioritising the health and wellbeing of our people and creating the conditions for healthy working environments.



Supporting development

Commit to continuing professional development for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.

Employer actions – maximising your impact

From our discussions with employers in NHS organisations and by drawing on the evidence base, we know that successful retention interventions with the most impact include the following factors:

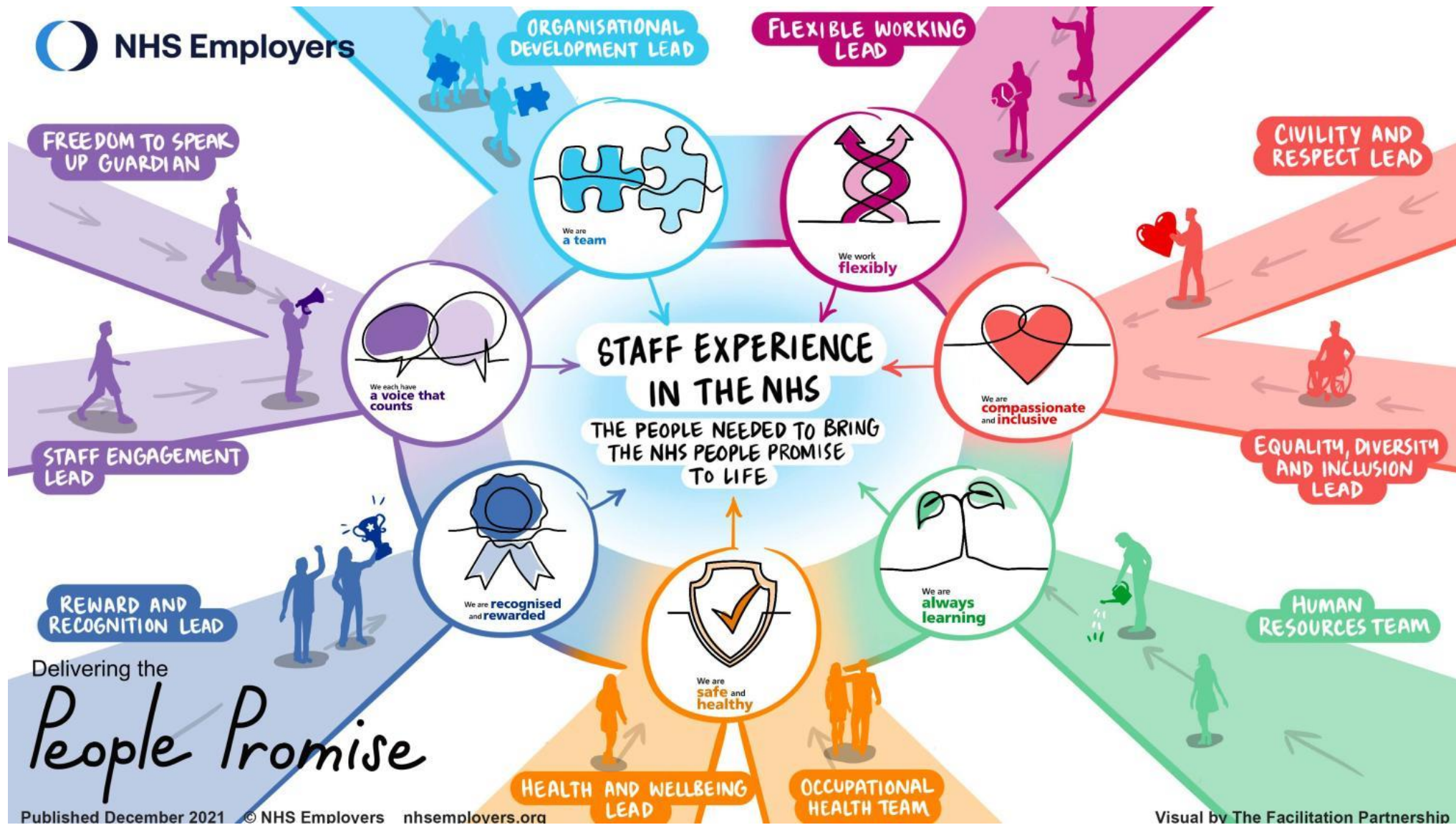
- Data analysis and staff feedback via retention and stay conversations.
- Investing in a culture that support flexible working and health and wellbeing.
- Equipping line managers and developing compassionate and inclusive leadership.
- Tackling bullying, harassment and violence.
- Enhancing learning and development opportunities.
- Ensuring equality and diversity by implementing actions set out in [NHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan](#).
- Understanding the role of reward and recognition, balancing national and local needs.
- Be proactive by implementing a continuous improvement approach, supported by a local retention improvement plan.

The importance of taking a data-led approach

Taking a data-led approach will help to inform and measure the success of your retention strategy. Think about the different ways that you can understand and use data to drive positive action:

- Ensure board-level ownership – The board should regularly review data and be accountable for any identified actions.
- Link leaver data with data on staff experience, absence / presenteeism and other HR metrics.
- Make effective use of data from ESR on leavers and model hospital system data (benchmark and trend).
- Gather and analyse data on the reasons why staff are thinking of leaving.
- Identify hot spots and areas to learn from.
- Evaluate the impact of interventions.
- Adapt and tailor your approach to local context.

Who can bring the NHS People Promise to life?



Governance and assurance – critical questions

As a senior leader, ask yourself and your board the following questions to ensure you are maintaining a core strategic focus on retaining your highly valued NHS people.

- Are we taking positive action to drive retention and make the NHS People Promise a lived reality for our NHS staff?
- How can we create the conditions for staff to stay and thrive in the NHS?
- Are we delivering single action interventions or taking a joined-up approach to support all elements of staff experience? If not, how can we work collaboratively to do this?
- What is happening now and how do we learn from that?
- Are we learning from others and demonstrating the best employer practice?
- Do we have a robust action plan in place that will help prioritise actions to make short-term, medium-term and long-term improvements to staff experience?
- How are we aligning our local retention strategy with the wider ICS systems wide retention strategy and activities?
- Do your staff experience practitioners/leads understand their role in bringing the NHS People Promise to life and what would help them in their role to deliver this work?
- Are we listening to staff to understand their reasons for leaving and taking action based on their feedback?

Further useful resources:

- [Retention hub](#)
- [Staff experience hub](#)
- [Health and wellbeing hub](#)
- [Flexible working hub](#)
- [Equality, diversity and inclusion hub](#)
- [Reward and recognition](#)
- [Staff engagement](#)
- [Organisational development](#)
- [Freedom to speak up](#)
- [Supporting staff with the rising cost of living](#)
- [Education training and development](#)