

SEPTEMBER 2015

Effective management of temporary staffing: what does it look like?

These top tips were gathered at the NHS Employers workforce supply event on 20 July 2015, looking at how the NHS can reduce reliance and spend on agency staff.

Feedback has been summarised under [NHS Employers' five high impact actions](#)

Increase understanding of the issue

- Know how your current staffing is deployed and maximise its use before going to an agency or bank.
- Make full use of the management information you get from your electronic systems.
- Access real time data to help you understand who is in work, acuity of patients, and workforce activity.
- Carry out as much advanced planning as possible.
- Regularly review vacancies, and if possible fill them rather than cover with agency, especially in staff groups where there is no shortage. Make use of short /fixed term contracts to support this.
- Understand the core human behaviours that make individual employees want to move from their substantive/bank position into agency work, and focus your methods on offering attractive alternative options.

Manage the process and take control

- Establish clear controls on the use of agency, authorisation processes and ensure that these are adhered to.
- Demonstrate strong leadership from the top of the organisation. Enable leaders to be firm and clear about the policy on agency usage.
- Use strong leadership at a local level to manage staffing and agency spend.
- Use electronic systems to help manage the process, such as e-Rostering, and 'employee online'.
- Centralise the process of e-Rostering and agency booking.

Manage your workforce, create a sustainable supply

- Flex your current workforce to move where the need is
- Manage the bank:
 - Use recruitment to establish a good supply, target new starters, and those who were appointable but not successful at interview.
 - Engage with the staff on the bank, through appraisals, training, regular communication.
 - Ensure that the organisation as a whole sees bank staff as a valuable asset and treats them as core part of the team.
- When considering staffing requirements pay attention to skills and make sure that staff with the right skills are used accordingly – this will also ensure patient safety.

Work collaboratively

- Work closely with commissioners to identify the workforce requirements of new commissions.
- Ensure effective procurement of services – have one point of contact for agencies, avoid unmanaged commissions, have clear service level agreements (SLAs) to measure performance against, and invest in partnership relationships.
- Invest in training for managers - key line management skills, such as having difficult conversations, e-Rostering, workforce planning (medium, short and long term).

Engage with staff

- Review flexible working arrangements with all existing staff on a regular basis.
- Dedicate resources to working with staff to change behaviours; to help them understand that the use of agency staff as a first option is no longer acceptable. Monitor who is doing this and support them to look at alternative options.
- Improve your reward packages – find out what different staff groups/generations want from an employer? Use the options available in total reward packages. Understand what makes staff leave or stay - to improve retention.

Find out about future workforce supply, and future events, and get involved via the [NHS Employers](#) website.

Join the conversation on twitter, using the hashtag #NHSworkforcesupply
Email the workforce supply team to be kept in the loop on developments:
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