Overhauling Recruitment

Alternative Approaches to Attraction Toolkit

Target audience: Deputy HRD/AD/Heads of resourcing

About this toolkit

The Overhauling Recruitment Programme is seeking to change the way that the NHS attracts, selects and onboards people into the service.

This toolkit looks to explore creative and innovative recruitment methods for finding the best candidates. By doing something different we can show potential applicants that the NHS is an exciting organisation to work for, that we embrace approaches that suit different groups of people, and that we attach great value to candidate experience.

This pack is designed to support HR Directors, Deputy HR Directors, Heads of Resourcing and their teams in NHS provider organisations and systems develop an understanding of alternative approaches to recruitment which:

- Reach a wider candidate pool and increase visibility in the job market. This can help attract a more diverse group of candidates with a broader range of skills and experiences.

- Help streamline recruitment efforts and reduce the time and resources needed to fill vacancies.

- Improve candidate experience by offering multiple ways for candidates to learn about job opportunities and apply.

- Diversify the candidate pool to bring a range of perspectives and experiences, as well as improving decision-making and problem-solving.

This is toolkit one of several, part of the overhauling recruitment series. Model documents, case studies and other helpful resources can be found on FutureNHS.

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NHS England

The challenge of attracting, recruiting and retaining staff is a key issue across the NHS. We need to attract people through a compelling employment offer which appeals both to people with experience and people with potential. Continuing to use the same, historic recruitment methods needs to change to appeal to a different audience, rethinking traditional recruitment methods and tapping into new, diverse channels, appealing to younger cohorts.

Two stages

1 **Understand your current methods**

There will be tried and tested attraction methods that work for organisations in different localities, with differing local populations.
It is key to keep doing what works, stop what isn't working, and try some alternative approaches.

Create a list of what you are doing already to attract applicants. This might include:

- Large volume advertising campaigns

- Local face to face hiring events

- Same day offer recruitment events

- Advertising through clinical, medical or professional journals

- Posting on Twitter and linked in social media

- International recruitment events

- Refer a friend attraction campaigns

- Student recruitment events

- Partnerships with organisations like The Princes Trust, Anchor programme

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2 **Formulate a plan**

Using the results of your diagnosis it's time to formulate a plan for alternative approaches. Consider adapting your recruitment processes to reduce bias and ultimately open your roles to a wider audience.

Also use data from recent workforce race disability and equality standard (WDES and WRES) reports as well as protected characteristic demographics for applicants, and post codes and locations where candidates are applying from.

Examples of an alternative approaches to attracting staff:

- Internship programmes

- Video job adverts and job descriptions

- Job casting, People promote roles or services with advertorial style video content.

- Peer to peer networking

- Social media campaigns

FutureNHS has case studies and other toolkits which complement this subject including a toolkit about developing your own attraction strategy.

Dedicated Recruitment Specialists

Your organisation could use dedicated recruitment specialists to help recruit new talent. Below are just a few examples, and there may be other ways, depending on the specific needs and goals of your attraction, recruitment and retention strategies. Remember the aim is to use specialist recruiters to target specific groups of people.

- Dedicated recruitment specialists identify with their audience as they have lived experience and know what to say / do / and how to act in order to attract the best candidates. This will take away some clinical team involvement and time, as recruiters with clinical experience should be seen as more knowledgeable / understanding of specific roles and requirements.

- Using alternate skill sets within the recruitment team can add great value and bring a diverse approach to traditional recruitment. An example would be to employ a social media specialist or a workforce analyst to work either in their intended professions or to train as recruitment business partners, using each of their skills sets to improve your service.

- Recruitment specialists can help to identify the best recruitment strategies for different roles and locations. They can help design job postings, create recruitment campaigns, and identify the best platforms and channels to reach potential candidates.

- Help to screen and select candidates by reviewing CVs and applications, conducting initial interviews, and making recommendations to hiring managers. This is particularly useful with clinical roles.

- Organise recruitment events, such as open houses, job fairs, and information sessions, to attract potential candidates and provide them with information about the NHS and the opportunities available.

- Build relationships with universities and other organisations to access a wider pool of potential candidates and stay informed about the latest developments in healthcare education and training.

- Ensure that the candidate experience is positive throughout the recruitment process, by providing timely communication and feedback, and addressing any concerns or issues that arise.

- Measure and report on recruitment performance, by tracking key metrics such as the number of applicants, time-to-recruit, and cost-per-recruitment. They can also help identify areas for improvement and make recommendations for changes to the recruitment process.

- Through networking can help build an employer brand that is attractive to potential candidates, by highlighting the benefits of working for the NHS, such as opportunities for professional development, cutting-edge technology, and the ability to make a real difference in people's lives.

NHS England

The UK's largest current workforce is the millennial workforce of 35-49-year-olds. However, just over half of 16 – 24-year-olds are employed. This age group will be our next workforce.

Consider how your organisation engages with the local community and labour market, academic institutions and employment pathways, for example Job Centre plus, to attract these crucial pools of talent into roles.

Overall, recruiting students before they have completed their courses can be a good way for organisations to access a pool of talented individuals, but it does come with certain risks, and organisations should be mindful of the potential downsides. Recruiting students before they have completed their courses can have both positive and negative aspects.

Negative aspects to recruiting students early:

- Students who have not yet completed their courses **may lack the experience and skills** required for the job.

- Organisations may invest resources and time in recruiting students who **may not complete their courses** and become unavailable for jobs.

- Students, not having completed their courses may have **limited exposure to the sector** and may not fully understand the demands of jobs.

- They may not have the same level of commitment as those who have graduated and **may not stay with the organisation** for as long.

NHS England

Internship Programme

- Invite parts of the Trust to participate in a programme to draw specialist talent into the workforce for the Summer or for unique fixed programmes of activity.

- Place adverts for students to apply for roles such as space planners, architects, digital technicians, finance students, business or economic students etc.

- Allow them to join the bank for this fixed programme of work that will assist them to gain work experience and they may turn into a potential recruit.

Positive aspects to recruiting students early:

- Organisations can have access to a **pool of ambitious and talented individuals** who may not be available later.

- Can be **cost-effective** for organisations as they can get access to talent at a lower starting salary.

- Can **identify and develop future leaders** and high-potential employees who can be developed for future leadership roles.

- Can build stronger **partner relationships** with universities or education institutions and have access to the latest research and knowledge in their fields.

School Leaver Guaranteed Job Programme

- Work with schools and colleges in conjunction with parents to implement a guaranteed job programme for students still at school.

- The programme would define a clear career path and the organisation would commit to the young person's education plan, either through course or apprenticeship. For example School leaver – support worker – AHP professional

- College leaver – electrical apprentice – Estates team electrician

NHS England

The NHS attracts many more applicants than starters in any given year. Whilst there may be valid reasons they were not pursued/successful in their application this is an untapped talent resource. A talent pool is a collection of potential candidates that help an organisation grow and achieve its long-term goals. Built and maintained by recruiters, formulated as a database and usually managed with the help of an applicant tracking system (ATS), talent pools help organisations build 'reservoirs of talent' to have on hand.

Building and maintaining talent pools is both an art and a science. Ultimately, a well thought-out and well-managed talent pool will be able to offer and recruit interesting and talented individuals in a shorter period of time.

Five stages

1 Source

Build your talent pools from a variety of different sources such as internal talent programmes, unsuccessful candidates, referrals, students and graduates-to-be and former employees.

2 Segment

Segment your pool to fulfil certain needs and roles for your organisation. You can try targeted adverts inviting people with certain skills to join the pool such as project management, clinical skills, ICT etc. There do not need to be vacant roles, this is about pulling together a list of potential recruits.

3 Engage

- Periodically reach out to your pool with tailored messaging to suit their needs.

- Hold regular events which can be online as well face-to-face

- Offer advice/training on applications and interviews

- Pre-screen candidates and add skills to the alent pool to be matched with departments. This also allows relationships to be built with candidates to improve conversion and engagement.

4 **Recruit**

Access your pool by recruiting them with job offers and invitations or by directly recruiting to the bank. Recruitment business partners pair skills with recruiting managers with vacant posts

5 **Record**

Think about how you'll record your data, will your ATS be able to manage this for you? Will spreadsheets suffice, or do you need to consider a separate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system?

Metrics and Improvements

Candidate experience indicators are measures that help to track and assess the candidate experience during the recruitment process. These indicators can provide insight into how well you are engaging and attracting candidates, and can help identify areas for improvement as part of your strategy.

Don't forget to use these measures with your talent pool as it is a great opportunity to understand and improve your recruitment processes.

Measures can include **application completion rate**, **offer acceptance rate**, **candidate retention rate**, **candidate satisfaction and applicant experience**.

Volume recruitment methods, such as open adverts and large-scale recruitment events are regularly used by industries like hospitality hospitals, and retailers, as well as the NHS for bulk filling roles. The aim is to reach a large number of potential candidates in a short period of time, to increase the chances of filling vacancies quickly and efficiently.

There are several advantages to using bulk recruitment methods, such as:

- Open adverts for generic roles and without set interview times allow you to attract people continuously for high-volume roles and give an opportunity for you **to create a talent pool of candidates.**

- Large scale recruitment days enable candidates to visit an on-site venue to **talk to current staff** and recruiting managers about many roles across the organisation and, if the candidates meet the criteria for a role, be interviewed on the day.

- **Linking in with external stakeholders** such as job centres, employability schemes, universities and colleges to **promote your employer brand** and target attraction within your local community, supported by active social media presence.

- Helping to identify a **diverse pool of candidates** from a variety of backgrounds and experiences.

- **Gathering recruitment metrics** enabling you to collect a large amount of data in a short time.

- Providing a smoother on-boarding process by interviewing large numbers of candidates and only those that are successful then completing a formal application form, already knowing they have been offered an opportunity or alternatively, **same day interviews, offers and compliance paperwork complete.**

There are other areas within the NHS such as Healthcare Support Workers that use volume campaigns very successfully. Areas such as estates and facilities could benefit from this style of recruitment. Refer to the example below:

Healthcare Support Worker (HCSW) In person Recruitment Events

The NHS England Healthcare support worker (HCSW) Programme aims to grow the HCSW workforce nationally via enhancing new to care recruitment and reducing turnover of existing HCSWs.

In early 2022, it was recognised that recruitment activity needed to increase nationally to offset the rise in leaver rates, and reduce HCSW vacancies. As part of the Programme, NHS England collaborated with recruitment partner, Indeed, the event organisation, Worldspan, and multiple NHS organisations to run seven, large-scale, face to face recruitment events for HCSWs.

The events resulted in:

3,740 conditional offers

with an **82% interview to offer conversion** rate

38% of all offers were **new to care**

with a greater diversity of applicants noted.

A vacancy control process within recruitment refers to a set of procedures and guidelines that are followed to manage and control requests for potential vacancies to be advertised. It involves an vacancy control user group that meets to audit and regulate not only posts to advertise, but potential bank and agency spend for an area. These groups are usually quorate with attendees from finance, HR, Recruitment and clinical areas.

This group is designed to put rigor and control in place and to look at the budget control of these areas related to workforce. These groups need to approve role to be advertised.

A typical vacancy control process for recruitment involves several key steps:

- **Job creation:** The recruiting manager to upload the role onto NHS jobs or the applicant tracking system.

- **Add authorisers:** i.e., Finance, HR business partner, recruitment contact, ESR workforce support, who will each go through and assign their approval or otherwise to demonstrate the area has funding and the vacant establishment etc.

- **Approvals:** Each of the authorising parties will tick off authorisation as appropriate. If for example finance does not approve the post, they may then be asked to complete a form with a budget statement for the manager to take to panel to present the case for authorisation.

- **Vacancy panel meeting** may take place on ad hoc, weekly or monthly basis. The meeting is likely to be quorate and senior representatives from HR, finance and the senior leadership team will attend the meeting. The recruiting manager will have their vacancy discussed and an approval decision based on the information presented.

- **Successfully approved roles** will be put out to advert. Those not approved may need a business case or simply a return with further information i.e. if externally funded etc.

Pros

- Rigor and control

- Visibility of roles and recruitment

- Audit record

- Equitability and transparency

- Supports widening access to roles

Cons

- Can affect time to recruitment

- Delays to meetings cause advertising delays

- Recruiting manager frustration

- Team administering the process may not be the team that owns the process i.e., Finance and HR

Ask yourself these questions about what needs to change:

- Do we need better processes?

- Can this process be completed online?

- Does it need to be face to face?

- Can certain roles have automatic approval?

There are several ways that you can adapt your recruitment process to widen participation and ensure that it is inclusive and accessible to a diverse pool of candidates. Some possible strategies include:

Reviewing job descriptions and requirements: Make sure that job descriptions and requirements are clear, concise, and free of any unnecessary or exclusionary language. Avoid setting overly strict or unrealistic requirements that may unnecessarily disqualify qualified candidates.

Advertising widely: Advertise your job openings through a variety of channels, including job boards, social media, professional associations, and community organisations. This can help you to reach a wider pool of potential candidates.

Utilising diverse recruitment sources: Consider working with recruiters or employment agencies that specialise in diversity recruitment or that have a proven track record of placing candidates from underrepresented groups.

Offering flexible work arrangements: Offer flexible work arrangements, such as part-time or remote working, to make it easier for people with different personal or family commitments to apply and be considered for your vacancies.

Completion of Documentation: Consider completing recruitment documents, application forms etc. after the interview/assessment process, at offer stage

Interview Questions: Amend interview questions to support inclusivity and/or consider exercises as well as interviews as part of the recruitment method to enable all who participate to perform

Candidate Support: Provide interview preparation and support training to cohorts of potential candidates.

Consider adapting your recruitment process e.g. advertising through a network rather than just NHS Jobs. For example, if you interact with your local faith network you're not using a job advert or NHS jobs, it's a job description and overview. This can be cascaded in a way that reaches the population in a way that we cannot.

Think about writing job descriptions to attract candidates through different routes and enable the shortlisting of CVs. People could complete a formal application form first, however, it's better to do this only when they've been shortlisted from their CV.

One of the things that we've also learned is around interview questions and inclusivity. We ask interview questions in a very NHS specific way in my experience. One of the things around the refugee work we've done is that if you're trying to help someone understand the role then you need to review the interview questions so that you enable people to perform well in that environment. This also led us on to different methods of recruitment rather than just interviews. I'm a huge fan of practical tests and are there points in recruitment pathways where they work better than a traditional interview.

Also think about providing interview preparation and application support training to make your process as equitable as possible.

Head of Recruitment, Chelsea and Westminster NHS

Attraction routes to consider for widening participation

NHS England

Demographic	Attraction Route	Detail
Young People Lived Experience	Children in Care	Work with local college to recruit 18–21 year olds from this cohort
Lived Experience of minority backgrounds	Working with HMP employability teams	Work on potential employment pathways into Infrastructure roles, laundry or work experience
Young People Lived Experience from minority backgrounds	Local Gang Units	Work with local government gang unit leads to identify potential employment pathways into roles, work experience or volunteering
All	Refugee Recruitment	Work with local Refugee Recruitment leads to identify opportunities for employment
All	Volunteer to Career	60 hours volunteering national volunteer certificate leading into apprenticeship HCSW roles
Young People	Princes Trust	Work with The Princes Trust to recruit young people into recruitment

Demographic	Attraction Route	Detail
All	Job centre	Engage with the local Job Centres DWP to cascade and promote opportunities for employment
Young People	Local Colleges	Work with local colleges to open up the possibility of a career within the Health and Social Care Sector to the younger population
Young People from minority backgrounds	Faith Networks	Engage with faith networks to cascade opportunities and promote the possibility of working with Health and Social Care
Young People	Cornerstone employers	Cornerstone Employers help to: • Ensure all young people in their area have the opportunities they need to be prepared and inspired for the world of work • Give back to their community and support the growth of their local economy • Engage and develop with their current workforce • Inspire students about their sector or industry • Develop the skills required for the future workforce and build talent pipeline
All	Third Sector	Age UK, Carers UK, Access to Work

Attracting people to roles with Lived Experience *1 of 2*

'The experience(s) of people on whom a social issue, or combination of issues, has had a direct impact'. Recruiting people with lived experience provides a different kind of insight to gaps and barriers in the system, and what works well. Having lived experience in a workforce can help to bridge the gap between services and those who use them. People with lived experience have real insight and may have firsthand knowledge of what it is like to experience multiple disadvantage. People with lived experience can also be powerful role models for others.

Here are a few ways to encourage people with lived experience to apply for jobs:

- **Reach out to organisations** that serve the community you are trying to recruit from. They may be able to help spread the word about job opportunities and encourage people to apply.

- Make sure your **job postings are inclusive and welcoming**. Avoid language that might exclude certain groups of people and be clear about the skills and experiences that are most important for the role.

- **Consider not listing qualifications and previous employment** as criteria to instead encourage those with lived experience to not be deterred by requirements they may not have

- **Offer flexible scheduling or remote work options**, as these can be particularly appealing to people who may have other commitments or challenges.

- **Consider offering paid internships or training programs** to give people with lived experience the opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience.

- **Be open to recruiting people who may not have traditional education or work experience**, but who have relevant skills or abilities that make them a good fit for the role.

- **Consider offering support to help people with lived experience** overcome any barriers to employment, such as access to transport or affordable childcare.

- Finally, **be willing to have open and honest conversations with people about their experiences** and how they can contribute to your organisation. This can help build trust and encourage more people to apply

Here are some practical considerations:

- **Use your organisation's advert footer:** Some employers (such as Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust) add 'we positively encourage people who have experienced mental health problems to apply for a role within the organisation' to the footer of all vacancy adverts. This could help people with lived experience to have an equal chance in the recruitment process.

- **Include in person specifications:** Another way in which job roles have been amended relates to the extent to which the employee's lived experience is a core aspect of the job or incidental to it. Peer workers in mental health services are appointed into support roles on the basis that they will share their own experience with people using services. The same organisation may appoint a cleaner or an accountant with lived experience in order to strengthen the culture of the organisation without directly or explicitly bringing their experience to bear on their duties.

- **Promoting your vacancy:** People with lived experience will want to know what support they will be able to access as part of the role. The way you communicate your opportunity can be the difference in receiving lots of applications or little interest. These tips can help:

  - **Use clear and plain language** (try to sound like a person, not a corporation).
  - **Avoid using jargon or acronyms** that people may not understand.
  - **Less is more:** keep the information short and concise.
  - **Be responsive and connect with people** on a human level.

Trial Shifts

NHS England

Using trial shifts before employing someone is a process where a potential employee is given the opportunity to work a shift or a few shifts in the actual work environment before being officially recruited. This allows you to evaluate the candidate's skills, work ethic, and compatibility with the team.

Why should you consider this?

Ensures that the candidate is a good fit for the organisation and the specific role they are applying for. It allows employers to see the candidate in action and make a more informed recruiting decision. It also helps to minimise the risk of recruiting the wrong person, which can be costly in terms of both time and money.

How does it work?

Allows the candidate work a shift or a few shifts in the actual work environment, under the supervision of a current employee. During this time, the employer should observe the candidate's performance, interact with them, and gather feedback from other employees who have worked with them. After the trial shift(s) is over, the employer should then evaluate the candidate's performance and decide if they are the right fit for the role and the organisation.

Clear communication with the candidate about the trial shift process and how it will be evaluated is vital. Also, it is important to be aware of laws and regulations regarding trial shifts and temporary work in your area.

Temp to Permanent

NHS England
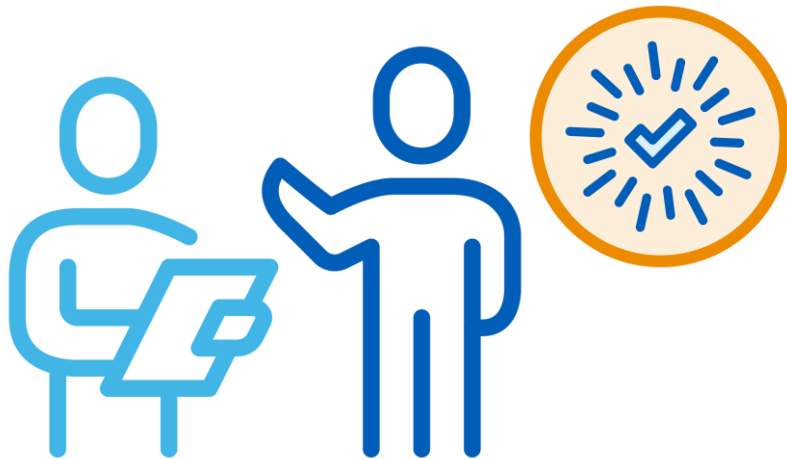
Employing people on a temporary basis before giving them a permanent contract is a process where a organisation hires an employee for a specific period of time, usually for a specific project or to cover a temporary need, before offering them a permanent position. The employee is usually referred to as a "temporary employee" or "temp."

Why should you consider this?

Provides flexibility for the organisation. It allows the organisation to fill a specific need or project without committing to a long-term employee. It also allows the organisation to evaluate the employee's skills and performance before offering them a permanent position, which helps to minimise the risk of hiring the wrong person. Additionally, it can help organisations save costs, such as training and benefits.
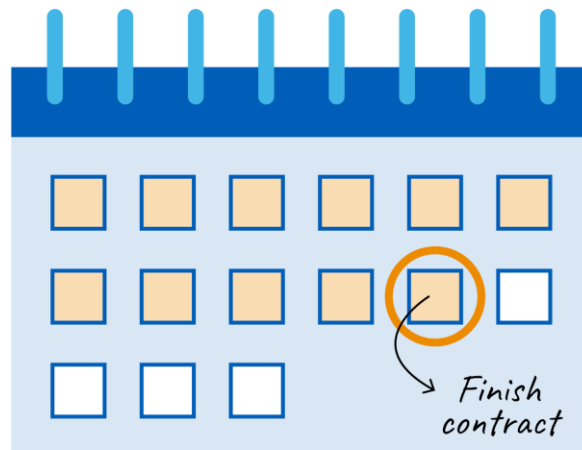
How does it work?

You can use a temp agency, however this may be costly. It would be more cost effective to engage the person via the bank , with a clear understanding that the position is temporary, and that it may lead to a permanent position if the employee performs well. The employer should also have a clear communication with the employee about the terms of the temporary position, including the duration of the assignment, the possibility of extension or conversion to a permanent position and the benefits offered.

It is also important to be aware of laws and regulations regarding temporary work and to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation.

Finish contract

Thank you for taking the time to view this pack.

This is one of a number of tools as part of the overhauling recruitment series. Model documents, case studies and other helpful resources can be found on **FutureNHS**.