

Classification: Official

Publication reference: [TBA]



Overhauling Recruitment Strategic Implementation Plan

11 May 2023, Version 0.5 - **DRAFT**

Introduction

The NHS People Plan 2020/21: action for all of us - set out several commitments that will deliver more people, working differently, in a compassionate and inclusive culture. The future of NHS human resources and organisational development report 2021 also made a number of commitments to transform the way people services operate. A critical part of both plans was that we, as an organisation, would seek to radically overhaul the way that the NHS recruits, selects and onboards people.

A significant amount has been progressed over the last two years and now marks the point at which we need to move this strategic and important commitment into a new phase of design, transformation, and delivery.

This document sets out the current context, details the direction of travel for the next three years and also outlines outcome measures which will seek to fundamentally change how we attract new and different people into the NHS and ensure their long-term success.

Strategic context

In 2022/23 we started to consolidate the good work undertaken over past years into supportive tools and frameworks which providers can use to adopt or adapt to their local circumstances. Producing these tools is helpful but the job isn't complete.

In 2023/24 we will see the publication of both the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Improvement Plan which will set a path for how we will grow our workforce, develop it and realise the opportunities for working differently. To achieve the plan, we know that the NHS' approaches to recruitment are not as effective as they ought to be and if we are to realise the potential of new and different people we are going to have to change and adapt our approaches to resourcing.

The LTWP will recommend that in the coming years we need to:

- 1 Maximise the potential of the NHS brand to market the 350 different roles and career paths our service has to offer.
- 2 Invest more effort in attracting people into entry level careers and healthcare support workers then supporting them to embark on apprenticeships.
- 3 Ensure our approaches to recruitment are modern, efficient and meet the needs of the labour market now and for the future.

Case for change

The sentiment

During the time that we were building the design for the first phase of the overhauling recruitment programme, we heard loud and clear from a wide range of people that changing the way we recruit is a priority. With over 200 different engagements from conversations to social media interactions the sentiment about the way in which the NHS recruits is strong with both candidates, managers and workforce teams asking for change.

We also heard from commercial partners that the way the NHS recruits is different compared to wider industry. One of the biggest areas of improvement is candidate experience. The NHS has an employer brand like no other organisation in the world. Great people want to join the service, but they want to do it in an easier way, and we need to break down the barriers for people to get a role in the NHS, and then stay with us.

Our approach is of a time

The way in which we recruit has been the same for decades. We wait for a manager to trigger a requisition to start advertising; an advert is then placed, we wait for people to submit application forms which span around 18 pages; a manager meticulously shortlists through an online system against the majority of the person specification criteria; panel interviews are set up; a conditional offer is sent; and then we vet every prospective candidate against extensive employment checks.

The processes described come with inherent issues, not least:

- Adverts are placed with little investment on whether they do well to attract – we ask managers to write the content and administrators to post them.
- Our approach to advertising is piecemeal, only advertising when a requisition is made by a manager.
- Job descriptions, which are used for grading, form part of the advert and are often voluminous, full of jargon and fail to paint a true picture of what a role does.
- Person specifications are excessively detailed and contain criteria which prevents people from alternative backgrounds and experiences entering the workforce.
- Our application forms are too long and give advantage to those who know how to complete them, rather than being inclusive.

- Shortlisting is a defensible but cumbersome activity with far too much time invested by managers in completing a process.
- We rely too much on standard interview panels as a means for selecting people, when we know that multi-selection approaches better support people from underrepresented backgrounds to demonstrate their potential.
- Our recruitment approaches favour meeting criteria, overpotential.
- Employment checks make up at least half, if not more, of the recruitment lapse time because of our extensive requirements, complexities and varied application.
- The Disclosure and Barring Service standards are often misapplied.
- The right to work and criminal records requirements still ask candidates to produce paper documents to prove where they live and exclude e-letters – a barrier for people from alternative backgrounds.
- Our methods for measuring recruitment performance are varied making it hard to benchmark against other organisations.

Added to the process, our approach to technology has been to wrap solutions around what we do rather than to explore new and more effective ways of working.

What data is telling us

From a data perspective, we know that NHS recruitment on average takes around ten weeks from an advert being placed to a candidate receiving a confirmation of a start date, compared to other sectors this is excessive.

NHS agency expenditure has returned to levels comparable to 2017, whilst much of this is driven by increased activity and absence cover, we know that vacancies are also a factor.

The workforce disability and race (WRES and WDES) national indicators continue to demonstrate the NHS lacks diversity and people from underrepresented backgrounds struggle to secure development and promotions.

We also lack a clear set of continuous and longitudinal data surrounding the experience of candidates and managers that progress through recruitment processes.

The job market has change

We are operating in a highly competitive labour market where candidates have significantly more choice about where they work. There are several examples of organisations which

have sought to simplify their approaches to hiring benefiting from direct hiring through to one click applications.

Our workforce is also changing, the way in which the emerging generations want to work and how they secure roles is different, yet still we apply a one size fits all approach.

Our vision for the future

From resourcing to talent acquisition

If we are to shift the dial and move the NHS to compete with the best, we need to fundamentally transition our approach to recruitment from an administrative process to one that focuses on talent acquisition aligned to local workforce plans.

Our first and important bold step is to invest in this important function and change the skills composition. In the future our talent acquisition services will be multi-professional teams that are focused on reducing burden on front line managers. These services will be focused on creating value added approaches to identifying and selecting talent through methods that are right for the target market.

In making this step we will also ensure all our approaches embrace inclusion by design, maximising the potential for new and different people to enter our organisations and also to support those already within the system progress and maximise their potential.

Efficiency will continue to be the focus and in delivering this strategic plan, we will seek to ensure that any candidate that applies for a role within the NHS reaches the stage of a confirmed start date within six weeks.

Candidate and manager experience will also be a critical success measure for our future talent acquisition approaches, our ambition will be high in this regard and be supported by meaningful metrics.

Maximising the use of the NHS brand

Research has shown that the NHS logo is one of the most recognised and evokes positive, rational and emotional associations of trust, confidence, security and a sense of dependability. Looking forward we want to maximise on this brand and further build our capability to attract new and different people to the service.

We will maximise the potential of national advertising campaigns and do this in a planned and strategic way which allows all organisations across the country to benefit from the activities.

To support this, we will develop a generic national employee value proposition and equip providers with the tools and frameworks to tailor this to their own organisational contexts.

One size does not fit all

In making this bold statement we will ensure that our recruitment processes no longer adopts a one size fits all approach and we change our way of thinking about recruitment into four core groups:

1. **Entry careers:** proportionate approaches which seek to introduce new and different people into the NHS whilst maintaining quality of appointments.
2. **Professional roles:** selection processes which help people leaving education and training and embarking on their first clinical and operational leadership roles.
3. **Niche positions:** within the NHS we have some small but highly important roles, they can range from inhouse catering to technology specialists. Our approaches for these positions need to reflect the unique nature and markets we will need to engage with.
4. **Managerial and leadership positions:** for those embarking in these roles, we need to ensure our selection processes set appointable people up for success ensuring they are equipped to manage multi-million pound budgets, lead large numbers of people, ensure safety and deliver high quality care.

When approaching our work we will always look at these four lenses in terms of design.

We will also maximise the use of sourcing approaches, gathering applications in a seamless way and seeking to match talent and potential to role requirements. We will do this through innovating our technology to help with appropriate skills mapping to vacancy requirements.

Making transfers seamless

We invest so much effort in creating administrative approaches to moving people around the system, diverting time and resource away from the front line. As we look to the future, we will have an established approach to enable seamless same grade transfers from one NHS organisation to another, without the need to respond to a vacancy.

In doing this we will create greater mobility with people records transferring with people and done so in a way that minimises repeat checking, where it can be reasonably be avoided.

Technology will support innovation

There are two major application management solutions in the NHS and more products are beginning to emerge. We will identify a senior responsible officer who will be tasked with developing and maintaining the national user specification for our products.

By defining the minimum standards for our solutions, we will seek to drive innovation using technology and respond to the innovation that we detail in this strategic plan.

Our technology will also facilitate meaningful insights and analysis that allows the NHS to evolve and adapt its processes around what actually happens – both experiential and process-based efficiency.

We will also have integrated solutions that can be utilised to market the 350 roles that exist in the NHS, route prospective people to the right place and rapidly allow that person to apply if they can see an alignment between their values and the competencies required for the role.

Lastly, our jobs boards will feature in the highest search positions across all major search engines making the NHS the first place an applicant in England goes to when they want a role.

The strategic segments to creating change

Through this vision, we will seek to delivery our ambitious strategic implementation plan through four core workstream areas that will shape the design of our future programme.

We are the market leader in talent acquisition

Our technology is innovative

Our talent acquisition teams are professional, diverse and equipped

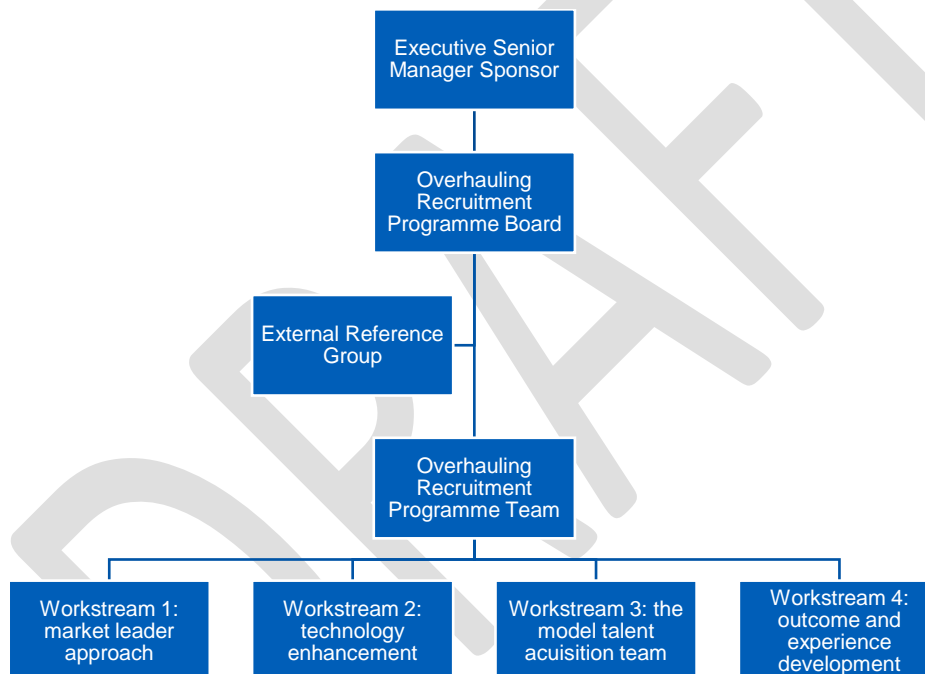
We are outcome and experienced focused

Delivering transformative change

We would be foolish to expect that all of this change can be delivered at a national level. Rather this strategic implementation plan is designed to set out a programme of work where nationally we will define the model frames and work with regional teams and systems to embed new and different approaches.

We will harness the talent of the overhauling recruitment steering committee and seek out keen and interested people to act as conveners for the four strategic segments, which will make up our workstreams and develop comprehensive plans and approaches which will make the vision a reality.

An outline programme governance structure is provided below:



In all of the above we also need to ensure we are focused on delivery and recognise that change takes time, we anticipate that this programme will span a period of up to three years.