

Overhauling Recruitment

Resource: Widening Access to Employment

About this resource

Thank you to the organisations that participated in Phase One of the Overhauling Recruitment programme and their contributions throughout. We've brought together specific content from Chelsea & Westminster, Avon & Wiltshire and Sussex Partnership into this one document around widening access to employment.

The aim of the resource is to focus on the demographics of your area and how you can target your attraction so that you're representing local population with a focus on protected characteristics as well as additional demographics such as economic inactivity, caring responsibilities and lived experience. The resource will cover strategies to enhance your recruitment process and ensure inclusivity in attracting candidates in order to:

- Guard against bias and encourage fairness and diversity
- Improve access and attract wider groups of people to our roles
- Work more closely with local partners and our communities.



This resource is part of the overhauling recruitment series. Toolkits and case studies can be found on [FutureNHS](#).

Contents



Sections	Slide(s)
What is widening access to employment?	4
High level approaches to widening access	5
Using Lived Experience as a criteria	6
Engaging people who have Lived Experience	7
Potential Recruitment Pathway for Lived Experience	10
Understanding your local population	11

What is widening access to employment?

Widening access to employment refers to the practice of eliminating or minimising the influence of personal prejudices or subjective decision-making in the hiring process. Bias can take many forms, including unconscious bias, which refers to the unconscious associations and stereotypes that individuals may hold about certain groups of people. Widening access offers numerous benefits and contributes to the overall success and growth of your organisation:

Diversity and Inclusion: By widening access to employment, you foster diversity and inclusion within your organisation. Embracing a diverse workforce with individuals from different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences enriches your workplace culture, stimulates creativity and innovation, leads to better decision making processes and ultimately creates high-performing teams.







Employee Engagement and Retention: Employees feel valued and motivated when they work in an inclusive environment where their differences are respected and celebrated. Widening access to employment fosters a culture of belonging and can lead to higher employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention rates. A diverse workforce also encourages personal and professional growth, as employees learn from one another's experiences and perspectives.

Enhanced Talent Pool: By reaching out to a broader range of candidates, you tap into a larger talent pool. This allows you to attract skilled individuals who may bring unique expertise, fresh ideas, and alternative approaches to problem-solving. A diverse talent pool enables you to select from a wider array of candidates who possess the skills and qualifications your organisation needs to thrive.

Legal and Ethical Considerations: By widening access to employment, you ensure compliance with legal obligations and promote fairness and equity in the workplace. It is essential to create an environment that respects and upholds the rights of all individuals.

High level approaches to widening access

Below are a number of high level approaches to consider when thinking about widening access to roles within your organisation.

-  **Use multiple advertising routes:** 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.
-  **Establish clear job criteria:** Clearly show what sort of person you are looking for to be successful in the role, not just the educational and experience 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.
-  **Use diverse recruitment panels:** Assemble a diverse panel of individuals to review and evaluate candidates who have training in unconscious bias and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. This can help bring a range of perspectives and experiences to the recruitment process and reduce the influence of bias.
-  **Use 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.
-  **Offer flexible work arrangements:** These can include part-time or remote work, to make it easier for people with different personal or family commitments to apply for your job openings.
-  **Consider alternatives to the usual interview structure:** traditional interviews are useful, but not the only way that people can be assessed as to whether they could perform in a role. Amend interview questions to support inclusivity and/or consider exercises as well as interviews as part of the recruitment method to enable all to participate to perform. Practical, on-the-job and other types of assessment help reduce the influence of bias and aid to attract people to your roles. To support this you can
 - Provide interview preparation and support training to cohorts
 - Complete Recruitment documentation after interview and at offer stage

Using Lived Experience as a criteria

Lived experience is defined as “personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand involvement in everyday events rather than through representations constructed by other people”. It is also defined as “the experiences of people on whom a social issue or combination of issues has had a direct impact.”

People with lived experience often face a number of barriers as a result of a mixture of their circumstances, a lack of self-esteem and confidence. People with lived experience are often overlooked because they can be harder to reach and attract than other applicants, or they don't have enough direct experience of working in a similar setting.

A person with lived experience can have a great deal of positive transferrable skills, values and behaviours to offer the NHS. The relationship is a reciprocal one. People with experience of multiple disadvantage have much to offer, and gain, particularly by working in roles supporting people facing multiple disadvantage.

Having lived experience in a workforce can help to bridge the gap between delivery of services and the people who use them. People with lived experience have real insight and first-hand knowledge of what it is like to experience multiple disadvantage. People with lived experience can also provide powerful role models to others.

Recruiting people with lived experience provides a different kind of insight to the system as they better understand where focus can be placed on making improvements. Also, they be seen as a role model, embodying hope for others who may be currently unemployed or trapped in unrewarding occupations.

If an individual has direct experience of domestic abuse, homelessness, mental health issues or misused drugs and alcohol, they have lived experience of these issues – they have lived it, breathed it, worn the t-shirt and read the book. As such, the wisdom and insight they bring to the world, and they bring to those who work in health and social care, is unique and invaluable.

Over the next three pages we'll look at different ways to engage with people who have lived experience.

Engaging people who have Lived Experience 1 of 3



- Commit to engaging people with lived experience.** This must come from Executives and senior leaders in the organisation. They must be ready, willing, and committed to adopting an inclusive approach. Identify who are your major stakeholders and start the conversation and build your business case.
- Create a culture of inclusion.** Brainstorm with your key stakeholders on how you plan to build diversity, equity, and participation. Commit to using inclusive language when recruiting, to be patient and understanding, open to new ideas and build trust and mutual respect. Define how your organisation will create safer spaces where everybody feels comfortable and where diverse perspectives are heard.

Involve employees with lived experience on policy decisions and create a staff network or forum, so that lived experience becomes a normal part of Trust business and not something just referred to in a policy document.

- Recruit people with lived/living experience at all levels.** In inviting people with lived experience to engage, be mindful to keep application and engagement requirements and processes flexible and accessible. Define the time, duration, and type of interview requested, and be clear about how you will support people through the process. You may want to consider using other schemes to attract people with lived/living experience as many may never have considered a career in the NHS and will need to be reached through other ways rather than standard advertising.
- Compensate interview-related expenses.** Eliminate financial barriers for people with lived experience. Consider ways of reimbursing for interview expenses for those who may be on benefits or on a low income, for example, by providing directly or by reimbursing costs of food, transportation, childcare, and other services as required. Prepare and discuss with the wider organisation and your staff side colleagues how you can do this in an equitable and fair way.

Engaging people who have Lived Experience 2 of 3



Design selection processes with people in mind. Ensure that person specifications only include requirements that are essential for the role and consider what transferrable skills might be suitable rather than a focus on qualifications and previous experience. Could you involve other employees or volunteers with lived experience in the process?

Avoid jargon in all recruitment documents including the advertisement and think about how you might be able to target a different audience. For some roles, work placements or job-ready training arranged in partnership with a third party may be a good way of ensuring you reach people with lived experience and provide them with the support they need to make a good application.

Schedule interviews in physically accessible venues at convenient times where attendees feel comfortable. Depending on the role, consider whether a traditional interview is the best method of assessing whether someone is suitable – perhaps a work placement might be a better way.





Create opportunities to engage. Speak to people who may already be employed within the organisation, who have lived experience, about their recruitment experience and how it could be improved, or what was good about it.


Think about how to involve people throughout the recruitment process. Could you invite them in to look around your department, meet members of the team? During the shortlisting process ring them up to discuss their application or talk through any concerns they may have about the interview process. If someone is unsuccessful, ensure that they are provided with constructive feedback and be available to discuss other pathways if someone is not quite ready for the role for which they have applied. Consider whether other opportunities such as volunteering or an alternative role may be an option for them to gain more experience or insight.

Engaging people who have Lived Experience 3 of 3



 **Provide a flexible, supportive environment.** People with lived experience may encounter some challenges as they undergo pre-employment checks, for example if an individual has been homeless it may be more challenging to prove their identity or employment history. Be flexible and use discretion in these situations by carrying out a robust risk assessment and be flexible where appropriate. Once an individual has started work, ensure that they are provided with a supportive, flexible environment where they can gain confidence and thrive. Hold regular check ins with them to ensure they feel supported. Through staff networks or forums, promote your commitment to employees being their own genuine self in a supported environment.

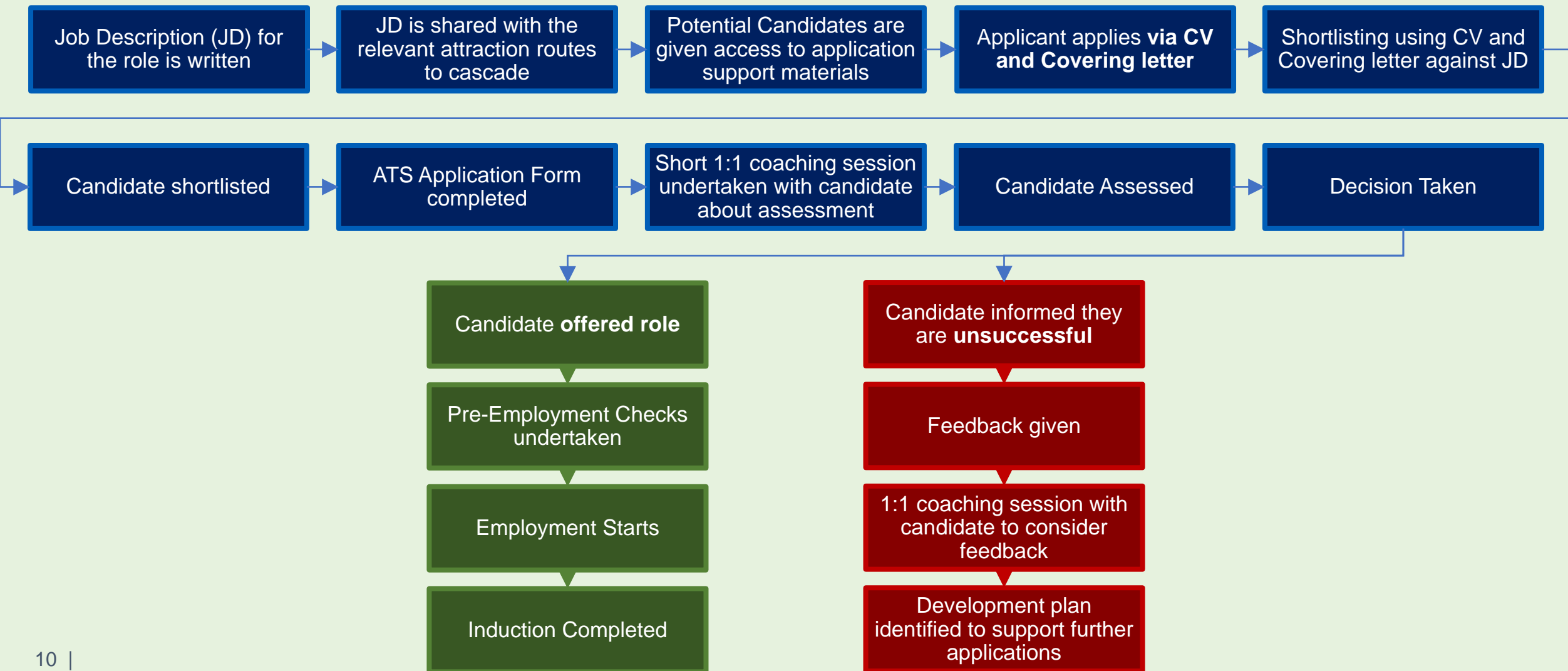
 **Join up with partner organisations.** How can they help you reach your target audience and share their experience with you. Consider linking in with NHS or local authority partners to share and promote ideas and work collaboratively. Try not to reinvent the wheel locally – seek out great ideas and groups already out there.

 **Build capacity.** Speak with your Learning and Development colleagues about what additional training would be on offer for those with lived experience to help them build their confidence and skills.

Aim to grow diversity of representation within your organisation, for example across ethnic, cultural, and gender identities, and across Indigenous, immigrant, and disability status. Plan how you can deepen meaningful engagement of people with lived experience across all of your organisations structures, processes, and activities.

Think about wider links and other organisations who might offer back to work programmes for people with lived experience, that could support.

Potential Recruitment Pathway for Lived Experience



Understanding your local population 1 of 7

Understanding the demographics of your local population can be helpful to determine your recruitment approaches as it can give you real insight into the pool of potential candidates that are available to you.

For example, if your local population has a high percentage of people with certain skills or education levels, it may be easier for you to find candidates with those qualities. On the other hand, if the local population has a low percentage of people with certain qualifications, it may be more challenging to find candidates and you may need to look further afield.

Additionally, understanding the demographics of your local population can also help you to identify any potential diversity or inclusion gaps in your recruitment efforts and take steps to address them.



The next few pages will look at six areas to focus on when considering your local community and what you can do to include these groups.

Remember, these are just some of the areas to consider so please don't take these as being a definitive list, only you know the area your organisation serves so take your time, do your analysis, research and consider carefully the make up of your population to inform your recruitment approach through your attraction strategy.

Understanding your local population 2 of 7

Caring Responsibilities. A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support.

- The most recent Census 2021 puts the estimated number of unpaid carers at 5 million in England and Wales.
- This means that around 9% of people are providing unpaid care. However, Carers UK research in 2022 estimates the number of unpaid carers could be as high as 10.6 million (Carers UK, Carers Week 2022 research report).
- Every year, 4.3 million people became unpaid carers – 12,000 people a day (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022).
- 58% of unpaid carers are women (Census 2011). Women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022)
- Between 2010-2020, people aged 46-65 were the largest age group to become unpaid carers. 41% of people who became unpaid carers were in this age group (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022).



How to include this group

- Flexible working policy clear and obvious to all applicants from the outset
- Looking beyond experience and gaps in employment towards skills and qualities
- Create a 'Guide to Applying', breaking down each step of application process
- Pursue alternative recruitment methods beyond structured interviews
- Encouraging Lived Experience throughout your process.



Understanding your local population 3 of 7

Economic Inactivity. People not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last 4 weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next 2 weeks.

- In 2021, 22% of working age people in England, Scotland and Wales were economically inactive.
- 21% of white people were economically inactive, compared with 27% of people from all other ethnic groups combined.
- The combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group had the highest rate of economic inactivity (35%), and the 'white other' group had the lowest (15%).
- In every region, white people had a lower rate of economic inactivity than people from all other ethnic groups combined.
- In every ethnic group, women were more likely to be economically inactive than men.



How to include this group

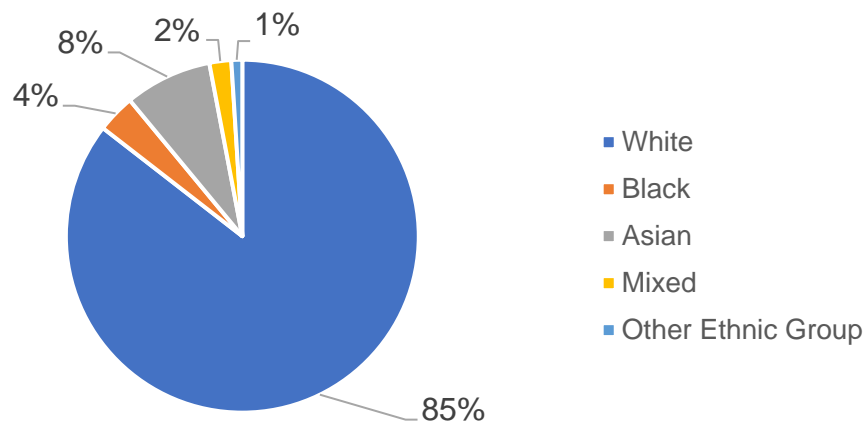
- Provide support and guidance: individuals from an economic inactivity group may have a range of barriers to employment, such as lack of confidence, lack of experience, or caring responsibilities.
- Offering flexible work arrangements
- Providing training, development and career path opportunities.
- Partnering with relevant organisations such as job centres, community groups, and training providers



Understanding your local population 4 of 7

Ethnicity. 75% of working age people (16 to 64 year olds) in England, Scotland and Wales were employed in 2021.

- 76% of white people were employed, compared with 67% of people from all other ethnic groups combined. The lowest employment rate was in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group (58%).
- The population of England consists of:



How to include this group

- Analyse your Ethnic minority representation as a whole and then drill down to the differences by bandings
- Push for ethnic minority uptake of apprenticeships schemes
- Ensure learning, development, career progression and mentoring opportunities are at the forefront of adverts and job descriptions
- Work with agencies experienced in delivering diverse candidates into VSM roles to ensure that the widest pool of talent is being reached
- Clear and meaningful diversity information on careers site
- Testimonies from ethnic minority staff.



Understanding your local population 5 of 7

Age. There are already 9.4 million people in employment over the age of 50 in the UK, equivalent to over 30% of the workforce. Of this group, over 1.5 million workers are employed in health and social work.

There are unlikely to be enough younger people entering the labour market to replace this group when they leave the workforce, taking their skills and experience with them. Replacing such large numbers of people will require a significant number of future school-leavers and potentially migrants to fill the gaps left by older workers leaving these sectors.



How to include this group

- Expanding employment opportunities to appeal to school leavers
- Apprenticeships, work trials, supported employment
- Emphasis on learning and development
- Flexible working policy clear and obvious to all applicants from the outset
- Schools outreach and learning sessions
- Targeting school leavers and retired returners would provide a large candidate pool with varying skills and experience to draw from



Understanding your local population 6 of 7

Disability. The definition of disability used is consistent with the core definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010. A person is considered to have a disability if they have a long-standing illness, condition or impairment which reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

- In 2021, 1 in 5 of the working-age population were classed as disabled.
- The disability employment rate was 52.7% in Q2 2021, compared to 81.0% for non-disabled people.



How to include this group

- Project SEARCH - [DFN Project Search Hospital Programmes](#)
- Jargon free job adverts and job descriptions
- Looking beyond experience and gaps in employment towards skills and qualities
- Create 'Guide to Applying', breaking down each step of application process
- Pursue alternative recruitment methods beyond structured interviews
- Offering flexible work arrangements



Gender:

- Population of England & Wales is 51% female and 49% male ¹
- 1% of population thought to be non-binary ²
- The majority of roles in the NHS are filled by females ³

What does this tell us?

- Getting more men into frontline health and social care roles is one way to approach the healthcare worker shortage⁴
- Attracting men with targeted campaigns would not only assist recruitment needs but would also go some way to represent the men who use our services
- Currently, we have no way of knowing how many non-binary applicants or staff are in the organisation due to ESR limitations, yet it is still vital to be an attractive employer of choice to people from these backgrounds.



How to include this group

- Supporting freedom of gender expression from the outset, despite limitations
- Acknowledge limitations of ESR equality monitoring
- Pronouns in email signatures and in manager information on job advert
- Community outreach
- Speak to local groups about their needs, asking what can be done to get more men to apply for healthcare roles



Sources:

1. [Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandcare/populationandhousehold/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021)
2. [The truth about trans \(stonewall.org.uk\)](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/news/the-truth-about-trans)
3. <https://www.nhsemployers.org/system/files/2021-06/Gender-in-the-NHS-infographic.pdf>
4. [Getting more men into nursing means a rethink of gender roles, pay and recognition. But we need them urgently \(theconversation.com\)](https://www.theconversation.com/healthcare/2021/06/23/getting-more-men-into-nursing-means-a-rethink-of-gender-roles-pay-and-recognition-but-we-need-them-urgently)



Thank you for taking the time to view this resource.

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](#).