

FOI 0166 2024 Response

Hello,

I hope this message finds you well.

As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance and streamline international recruitment processes, we are conducting a detailed analysis of current practices and challenges faced by NHS trusts. We kindly request your assistance in providing information under the Freedom of Information Act. The insights gathered will help us develop solutions that better support NHS trusts in recruiting top-tier international medical professionals.

Please find below a list of questions regarding your trust's use of agencies, recruitment practices, current and future hiring, recruitment efficiency and challenges, benefits and support, and visa and immigration processes. We would greatly appreciate it if you could provide your responses within the statutory 20 working days.

Use of Agencies

1. Does the trust use agencies to support with permanent/international hires?

Yes

2. Which agencies do you work with for international recruitment?

Pulse, Athona and MSI Group, Walson, HCL, Charkos.

3. Which types of hires do you regularly hire through these partners? (doctors, dentists, nurses, AHP, Non-medical).

Doctors and Mental Health Nurses.

4. Please provide a breakdown of how many hires you made through these sources in the last 12 months. (doctors, dentists, nurses, AHP, Non-medical)

Pulse: 3 / Athona: 2 / MSI Group: 2.

Since July to present Walsons: 22, HCL: 33 / Charkos: 69.

5. Please provide details about the fees paid to your agency partners, including the lowest fee, highest fee, and average fee. (over the last 12 months)

Fees are as per HealthTrust Europe Framework. Specialty Doctor grade £8,500. Consultant grade £11,000.

For Mental Health Nurses The Trust is unable to provide a response to this query.

This is because we do not capture the requested information as our invoices only have the name of the candidate and not whether they were recruited internationally.

Obtaining this data will therefore require exhaustive and manual measures that exceed the threshold of this task.

The Trust therefore rely on exemption Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to deny this aspect of your request.

6. What was the total spend on permanent international hires over the last 12 months?

The Trust is unable to provide a response to this query.

This is because we do capture the requested information as there are many components to international recruitment in addition to the agency fees (e.g. Certificate of Sponsorship costs, training costs etc.) some of these costs are paid by credit card, others by invoices from a variety of suppliers.

Obtaining this data will therefore require exhaustive and manual measures that exceed the threshold of this task.

The Trust therefore rely on exemption Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to deny this aspect of your request.

Recruitment Practices and Processes

7. Do you do any direct internal international recruitment?

Not for medical staff or Mental Health Nurses.

8. If yes, what processes does the trust use to find and hire?

N/A.

9. If yes, can you provide an example of the last time you did this, the number of hires you made, and how much it cost you?

N/A.

10. If yes, which countries did you target?

N/A.

11. If yes, what were the challenges of the experience?

N/A.

12. How do you assess the qualifications and credentials of international candidates?

We require Doctors to hold full GMC registration. In order to hold GMC registration a Doctor requires a Primary Medical Qualification from the GMC list of acceptable institutes, evidence of English language capability i.e. International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Certificate within the last two years and Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB) examination.

Following interview, our internal pre-employment checks include check of GMC registration and licence to practice, sight of qualification certificates, police clearance, health clearance, employment references, ID check, Right to Work check.

For Mental Health Nurses the agencies do the initial screening to ensure they meet the Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) requirements, like doctors they have to have a computer-

based test (CBT), objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) and English language qualifications.

13. Do you have a minimum requirement for experience for international hires? (doctors, dentists, nurses, AHP, Non-medical)

We consider experience equivalent to that specified in the NHS terms and conditions of service.

Current and Future Hiring

14. Do you intend to continue to hire foreign-trained medical professionals?

Doctors- yes and Mental Health Nurses no.

15. What percentage of your staff are currently foreign trained?

We do not currently record anywhere on our ESR HR system where an international Doctor/Mental Health Nurse gained their primary medical qualification.

16. Would the trust benefit from an international agency with lower fees?

Yes.

17. Does the trust have enough of a budget to hire all the staff they need?

Currently agency introductory fees are a cost pressure.

18. Do you have a specific budget for international recruitment? If so, how much?

There is no specific international recruitment budget for medical staff.

19. What is a breakdown of the open vacancies the trust currently has? (doctors, dentists, nurses, AHP, Non-medical)

Specialty	Grade	WTE
General Adult Psychiatry	Consultant	6.0
General Adult Psychiatry	Specialty Doctor	1.5
Older Adult Psychiatry	Specialty Doctor	3.0
Qualified Nurses	All bands	307.09

20. Would the trust hire internationally for these vacancies?

Consultant grade – Yes

Specialty Doctor grade – unlikely.

Mental Health Nurses - Not going forward

21. Does the trust believe the number of vacancies will increase in the coming years?

Consultants- Not significantly. Likely to remain at a consistent level.

Mental Health Nurses - Should be reducing with domestic supply.

22. Do you have any plans to support this?

We will continue with existing recruitment and retention initiatives

Recruitment Efficiency and Challenges

23. What is the average time to hire for international positions?

Consultants- 21 weeks for medical staff

Mental Health Nurses - 20 weeks from interview to arrival

24. What are the main challenges your trust faces in recruiting international staff?

International recruits require a greater level of pastoral support and induction when relocating to the UK and commencing work in the NHS. One of the challenges is supporting new international recruits to find suitable accommodation as the Trust does not have its own accommodation.

International recruits sometimes struggle to open bank accounts because often banks require a UK address history.

25. What support services do you provide to international staff to help them integrate into the UK and the NHS? This can include language training, cultural orientation, and professional development.

We have a specific induction handbook for international recruits (medical staff). We ask that new medical recruits attend the GMC Welcome to UK Practice training session. We also provide a medical mentor/buddy and support of a peer group.

Our nurses are offered 6 weeks accommodation when they arrive, as part of the onboarding they receive support with bank accounts, OSCE training, orientation to the NHS and living in the UK

26. What retention strategies does your trust employ for international staff?

The last section of our handbook for medical international recruits (released to the individual after the first month in post) provides information on making connections and building networks, training opportunities, career development, appraisal and revalidation and job planning to support any special interests.

27. How do you measure the success of your international recruitment efforts?

Follow up discussion with medical international recruits to hear of their experiences. Retention of staff and Reduction in vacancies

28. Do you collaborate with any educational institutions or professional bodies to support international recruitment?

GMC for their Welcome to Practice training session. Royal College of Psychiatrists for their MTI programme

29. What percentage of your total recruitment budget is allocated to international hiring?

There is no specific international recruitment budget for medical staff

30. Have you implemented any digital tools or platforms to assist with international recruitment? If so, which ones?

No

31. Are there any upcoming changes in your international recruitment strategy or policies?

No

Benefits and Support

32. What benefits do you offer international staff? (including but not limited to: free flights, initial accommodation, visa sponsorship, onboarding programs, test or qualification fees)

Support via the Trust Relocation Policy up to the maximum allowance as per contract duration. There is a specific section within the policy for non-UK residents taking up appointment, which includes support towards flight for employee and family from county of residence to the UK. Travel costs within the UK from port of entry to the local area. First 30 nights' accommodation as per rates set out in the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook.

Removal/transfer of personal effects from port of entry in the UK to the local area.

Visa costs, flights, 6 weeks accommodation, transfer, OSCE training, £1000 pay advance, transport to OSCE exam, bus pass

33. Who deals primarily with international hires? (person & department)

For medical staff – the Medical Workforce Department and Mental Health Nurses Trust Lead for Safer Staffing.

Visa and Immigration

34. What types of visas does the trust sponsor for international hires?

Health and Care Worker Visa.

35. What is the average time taken to process visa applications for international recruits?

Usually around 2-3 weeks.

36. Are there any specific challenges the trust faces in securing visas for international staff?

Cost of Certificate of Sponsorship is significant.

37. Does the trust provide any assistance or support for international hires during the visa application process?

We will provide advise as the individual requires to signpost to UKVI processes.

38. What percentage of international hires face visa rejections or delays, and how does the trust manage these situations?

We haven't had any rejections or significant delays.