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placing people first

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust's HR representatives Kim Gibbs, Carmen Barrett and Matron Diane Lee explain how recruiting from overseas has added value to the health service.

It is becoming increasingly commonplace for NHS Trusts to look overseas to recruit members of staff.

Nurses from the likes of Spain and Portugal have taken the number up to 5,217 registered with the NMC and it is becoming a trend among UK hospitals as cuts have limited the number of nurses trained in this country, according to The Telegraph.

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust found itself competing for qualified nurses with other, often larger organisations in the region to fill its vacancies.

Ms Lee, matron at the hospital, said: "We are a district general hospital and we're quite near to city centres. Sometimes a lot of nurses won't work in district general hospitals and will more likely go to city centres."

"Recent figures released in response to a parliamentary question highlighted a 51 per cent rise in the number of nurses from EU countries registered with the NMC to work in the UK."

Recruitment process

Starting the recruitment process in December 2013, the Trust worked alongside The Placement Group on two separate campaigns to source Band 5 Medical and Surgical Ward Nurses from both Spain and Cyprus.

Ms Lee describes Cyprus as being an "untouched area" in terms of health recruitment. English language skills are considered to be much better in the region and the Trust had experienced positive results when recruiting in Spain in the past.

With the help of The Placement Group, staff were able to fly to both countries and conduct face-to-face interviews. Ms Barrett, the Trust's employment services assistant, is a keen believer of this type of recruitment, as it helps to "get a better understanding of the person".

Following a successful recruitment process, the Trust was able to appoint 38 nurses who arrived at the Trust in two separate cohorts in February and May 2014.

"The Placement Group is aware that the recruitment process can be lengthy but is dedicated to thoroughly researching candidates prior to moving to the next stage."

Adding value

Recruiting staff is only the first hurdle for many Trusts as it is imperative that the new staff are able to acclimatise in their new surroundings. Both the Spanish and Cypriot nurses embraced their new surroundings and were able to engage effectively with patients and staff alike.

Ms Lee explained that the staff had been able to relate to patients with stories about their experiences back home.

"On the whole patients are very interested and when you speak to them they are interested in the fact that the nurses have decided to come to the UK to work. They like to teach the nurses about this country as well as listening about life back in their own country."

"The nurses are having regular conversations with patients and are being received really, really well."

Enthusiasm and will to work

Kim Gibbs, employment services manager at the Trust, explained that one of the more positive aspects of hiring staff from overseas is that they come to the UK with huge drive and willingness to do the best they possibly can.

Ms Lee noted the Trust is committed to upholding consistent values and standards of behaviour. The new staff have fitted into these parameters with ease.

"I find the real difference with these nurses is that they are so enthusiastic and they want to work,"
Ms Gibbs concluded.

"Working alongside The Placement Group, the Trust has been able to source nurses that are both enthusiastic and have a real desire to work in the UK."