



The Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Head of Resourcing, Julie Mitchell, explains how recruiting permanent hospital staff from overseas addressed her skills shortage

The UK's health service is facing a significant staff shortage and recruiting skilled staff is proving a significant challenge for hospitals.

According to recent research from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the NHS has lost nearly 4,000 nursing posts since 2010 and a prolonged shortage has the potential to put patient health in danger. At the same time, NHS trusts have been increasingly looking abroad to address the issue of falling staff numbers.

Mid Cheshire Trust had previously tried to address skills shortages through internal measures as well as using other agencies. However, when none of these efforts had been successful and proved too costly, the decision was taken to seek recruits from outside of the UK.

Head of Resourcing Julie Mitchell said: "We had tried to do things internally ourselves but it had not bore any fruit at all. We have worked with agencies paying hourly rates, however this is very costly and we had to pay introductory fee's which are both a set cost and time limited. We then approached The Placement Group about looking abroad."

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National issue

Looking abroad is an option that other NHS Trusts have been considering of late. Figures obtained by the Guardian highlight the dependency the NHS and health authorities has on the hiring of overseas staff.

Countries such as India (18,424), Philippines (12,744), Ireland (12,613) and Poland (5,507) have a large contingent of skilled medical staff already working in the UK while there is also a growing number of Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and Italian doctors and nurses in British hospitals. There are also significant numbers of UK-registered doctors that had been trained in the likes of India (25,122), Pakistan (9,401) and South Africa (5,442) before moving to Britain.

Paul Read, business director at The Placement Group in charge of permanent and international resourcing, believes tapping into the talent pool of overseas professionals offers the best immediate solution to address the UK healthcare skill gaps.

“Overseas trained medical staff play a vital role within the NHS. By recruiting internationally, hospitals have been able to fill the gaps left by a lack of available health workers within the UK,” he explained.

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An effectively tailored recruitment solution

Mid Cheshire initially enlisted the help of The Placement Group to fill medical vacancies but this was extended to permanent nursing positions once the project was underway. Starting in December 2012, the two collaborated to recruit Band 5 Medical and Surgical Ward Nurses with Spain being the main focus of the recruitment drive.

Once a shortlist of nurses had been arranged, a delegation of three Trust representatives and a project manager from The Placement Group travelled to Spain to meet the candidates. Following a successful recruitment process, 18 nurses were appointed by the Trust and commenced employment in February 2013.

The process was repeated in November 2013 additionally in this instance two Spanish nurses recruited from the first successful recruitment drive were enlisted to support trust representatives at the event. It resulted in a further 15 nurses being appointed taking the total number of relocations from Spain to Mid Cheshire to 33.

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Success

Mrs Mitchell hailed the partnership between the Trust and The Placement Group as a success.

“The staff that have joined us have been very successful and have been welcomed by the organisation - patients and staff alike.”

The move highlights the abundance of international healthcare talent available that can be instrumental in plugging the staff shortages in the UK.

Mr Read added: “With the growing staff shortages in the UK, looking abroad is the most logical step for NHS Trusts. Countries such as Spain have an abundance of skilled nurses and doctors that can add real value to the UK hospital workforce.”

The Placement Group hosted a social event to introduce the new Spanish recruits to the Mid Cheshire Hospital Trust



“It was great to meet the nursing staff who were immediately immersing themselves in British culture” Paul Read

Recruitment Projects Completed

Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

In total 33 Nurses were recruited and are now working at the Trust.



United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust

In total 66 Nurses were recruited and are now working at the Trust



Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust

In total 35 Nurses have been recruited for the Trust, 19 first wave and 16 second wave.



Tameside Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

16 Nurses are now being managed through the pre-employment process to commence with the Trust in May 2014.



Ongoing Projects

Hinchingbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust

Recruitment of 30 band 5 Medical Nurses. UK interviews were conducted on Monday 24th March, followed by additional interviews conducted in Spain. 5 Trust representatives and a TPG project manager travelled to Spain to conduct interviews on the 7th & 8th April 2014.

The Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust

Recruitment of band 5 Medical, Surgical and Emergency Nurses. 5 Trust representatives and a TPG project manager travelled to Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal to conduct interviews. 54 Nurses are to commence employment with the Trust in June and August with an additional recruitment project planned for June.

Barts Health NHS Trust

Recruitment of 40 band 5 Adult Critical Care Nurses for the ACCU at the Royal London Hospital. 5 Trust representatives and a TPG project manager travelled to Spain and Italy week commencing 28th April 2014 to conduct interviews. 20 Nurses to commence employment in June followed by 20 Nurses to arrive in August 2014.

Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Recruitment of 50 Band 5 Medical and Surgical Nurses. Trust representatives accompanied by a TPG Project Manager completed their first recruitment event in May 14, conducted in Spain. A second event is being undertaken at the end of May, as Trust representatives fly to Greece and Italy to conduct further interviews.