Making effective use of staff banks: toolkit

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1. Objective

Maximising the use of staff banks is a key part of the effective management of temporary staffing and in turn the reduction of agency spend.

In July 2017 NHS Improvement surveyed trusts to find out where and how they were using staff banks. Encouragingly, we found that almost every trust had a bank of some variety but there is still scope to increase the effectiveness and extend the reach of those banks, in particular for medical banks and collaborative banks.

With the help of trusts around the country, this toolkit pulls together case studies and resources and extrapolates key principles for effective bank management.

We produced this toolkit to support trusts and sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs) by sharing best practice. It focuses primarily on managing in-house rather than outsourced banks.

### Our bank strategy

<table>
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<th>Priority</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Improve existing banks</td>
<td>Share best practice through case studies, benchmarking data and supporting peer learning. KPI: Improve average <strong>bank fill rates</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Extend the scope of banks: Medical banks</td>
<td><strong>Support trusts to introduce medical banks</strong>&lt;br&gt;KPI:&lt;br&gt;- <strong>By December 2017</strong> increase proportion of medical temporary shifts filed by bank&lt;br&gt;- <strong>By December 2017,</strong> we aim to have 90% of trusts with a medical bank in development/delivery</td>
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<td>3. Promote collaborative approaches</td>
<td><strong>Support trusts and STPs to introduce collaborative approaches to reducing agency spend, including collaborative banks.</strong>&lt;br&gt;KPI:&lt;br&gt;- <strong>By December 2017,</strong> we aim to have a collaborative bank in development/delivery in every STP footprint where appropriate</td>
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2. Making the most of staff banks

1. **Governance**: Ensuring temporary staff are only used when necessary

2. **An integrated approach**: Ensuring the technology is in place to enable a streamlined end-to-end process from rostering to booking across permanent and temporary staff

3. **Flexible staff offer**: Ensuring the bank works around its staff and provides an attractive offer for flexible working

4. **Recruitment**: ensuring an active recruitment strategy onto the bank

5. **Engagement**: ensuring buy-in from staff across departments and disciplines

Although these steps focus on in-house staff banks, trusts considering a collaborative bank arrangement should ensure constituent banks meet these principles in order to maximise the effectiveness of the collaborative bank as a whole.
Step 1: Governance

**Objective:** The right governance, built on effective rostering, is key to ensuring that temporary staffing is only used when necessary and is used on a ‘bank first’ basis.

Since the introduction of the agency rules, trusts have put in place extra governance for agency use; many of the same principles apply to governance around use of bank. When examining your own bank governance, some questions to consider are outlined below. Further resources for assessing temporary staffing governance are included on the next slide.

1. **Controls:**
   - Is the appropriate sign-off in place to restrict the use of agency staff to only where required?
   - Does the process for booking bank ensure appropriate scrutiny while encouraging use of bank over agency? For example, is it more difficult to book an agency shift than a bank shift?

2. **Robust workforce and management information:**
   - Do the board and day-to-day decision-makers have access to real-time information on both agency and bank use for all relevant staff groups?

3. **Effective planning and rostering:**
   - Is the bank supported by high quality planning and rostering? Is the bank able to focus on hard-to-fill slots in advance?
   - Are there processes in place to ensure that shifts are cascaded to bank workers sufficiently in advance of agency workers?

4. **Leadership:**
   - Do the strategy and processes implemented to reduce agency expenditure and maximise use of bank over agency have senior buy-in from the board?
Case study: Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust medical bank

The medical bank team re-examined governance as part of the FlexiStaff+ project to increase bank fill rates. They found 95% of vacant shifts were known days or weeks in advance, yet often wards were turning to agency over bank.

The team amended the ‘escalation’ point at which you could turn to agency over bank to 3 days in advance for most shifts and 10 days for hard-to-fill specialties.

The bank team now focuses on ensuring regular communication with the consultants who log the vacancies to reassure colleagues that the vacancy is being filled and does not need to be cascaded to agencies.

Result: Within six months their bank fill rate increased from 33% to 70%.

Resources

Our e-rostering guidance: best practice advice and examples

Our Agency diagnostic toolkit: practical advice on assessing your governance around temporary staffing

Our guide to reducing reliance on medical locums: best practice and case studies
Step 2: An integrated offer

**Objective:** An effective bank must be part of one end-to-end process from rostering to booking, to avoid duplicative costs and maximise workforce productivity. This should be enabled by one, or multiple interoperable, technological solutions.

- **The staff bank should be an integrated part of a trust’s workforce management.** For some trusts an end-to-end process will mean integrating existing systems; for others it will mean moving their bank from a manual to electronic system. The components of this end-to-end process are set out on the next slide.

- Interoperable systems responsible for the end-to-end process enable trusts to have a **co-ordinated central bank** while devolving the booking of shifts to staff delivering the service (with appropriate senior oversight).

- Trusts should consider how this end-to-end process works with **back-office functions**, including human resources (HR), compliance and finance. This can streamline bank back-office costs and reduce duplication. For example, some software allows new bank workers to upload their pre-employment checks electronically, so reducing the time from recruitment to being able to work your first shift.

- Any bank process or software should be integrated with governance and processes for agency use. For example, when a vacancy is released, the technology-enabled processes should allow the shift to first go to bank workers and after a certain period of time be cascaded out to select agencies (ie tier 1).
Step 2: An integrated offer (2)

Elements of the ‘end-to-end’ process

- **E-rostering**
- **Vacancy release**
- **E-booking**
- **Payroll and invoicing**
- **Management information**

- **Back office**
  - **Compliance**
  - **HR/recruitment**
  - **Payroll**

- **Rostering**: Does the system integrate with the trust’s rostering software to enable effective workforce planning across temporary and substantive staff?

- **User portal**: Does the system have a portal for bank workers to view and sign up to shifts and upload timesheets?

- **Enhanced reporting**: Does the system provide real-time management information from ward level to board?

- **Back office**: Can the system streamline back-office functions by integrating with trust systems and/or performing those functions for the bank, eg uploading compliance checks, signing off e-timesheets, sending out e-payslips?
Step 3: Flexible staff offer

**Objective:** Banks will function most effectively and attract the most staff to work through the bank where they develop a flexible, user-friendly offer for their staff. This is a key way of encouraging staff out of agency and back into bank and substantive roles.

Some factors to consider include:

1. **Staff engagement**
   Trusts can explore different ways of understanding what staff want out of a bank offer, eg through focus groups or surveys. It’s important to consider whether the staff offer may need to be different for different staff groups, depending on working practices and preferences.

2. **Rapid time to hire**
   While substantive staff can often quickly start working for the bank, our July survey found that external bank staff often face a 6-12 week delay (compared with as little as a 24-hour wait to work agency).

   Streamlining pre-employment processes and checks (eg through apps where staff can upload documentation, or through dedicated recruitment and compliance staff for the bank) can improve the offer to staff and in some cases reduce overhead costs.

3. **Self-booking**
   Many staff will want the convenience of a digital platform to view and book shifts and upload timesheets, including via mobile phones.

4. **Advance notice**
   In line with e-rostering best practice, trusts should offer shifts to bank workers six weeks in advance, and to agency workers close to the date of the shift where no bank worker has been available.

5. **Frequency of pay**
   Our July survey found that 64% of trusts already offer the option of weekly pay and many trusts are planning to introduce it in 2017/18. Weekly rather than monthly pay is common practice among agencies to attract staff. Moving to weekly pay for the bank does create extra costs and trusts should therefore think carefully before introducing it.

6. **Training offer**
   A number of trusts are now offering access to online training courses via the bank as well as support for General Medical Council/Nursing and Midwifery Council revalidation. Some trusts have also begun offering full-time bank workers full inductions and appraisals.

7. **Rate of pay**
   A number of trusts are exploring bank rates to ensure they are cost effective and competitive. This includes enabling staff to match their Agenda for Change spine point when they work bank shifts, rather than being paid bottom of the band.
Step 4: Recruitment

**Objective:** A dedicated bank recruitment strategy to ensure that there is a sufficient pool of workers to meet as much demand for temporary staff as possible.

Effective banks need enough workers signed up on and actively working via the bank. Some factors to consider are outlined below.

1. **Enrolment:**
   Trusts should consider how they can proactively enrol new staff, eg opt-in forms as part of induction or through auto-enrolment (while being careful to ensure sufficient consent under the new General Data Protection Regulations).

2. **Active recruitment and advertising for bank roles:**
   A number of trusts are using an active recruitment strategy to attract non-substantive doctors to the bank, eg from agencies and from neighbouring trusts. Non-substantive staff often choose to do more bank hours than substantive staff. For medical banks, actively reaching out to old trainee doctors or trainees in the region can be an effective way of increasing the pool of workers. Some trainees may be looking for part-time work following their placement.

3. **Incentives for staff to sign up:**
   Some trusts have put in place incentive schemes to attract staff onto the bank, for example a bonus after completing a certain quota of shifts or for referring a colleague to work on the bank.

4. **Promoting the benefits of bank:**
   Consider an internal or local campaign to promote the benefits of working bank (in particular over agency). This can include access to the NHS pension, advanced notice of shifts compared to agency workers and in some cases the incentive schemes as above.
Case study: Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust medical bank

As part of the Flexistaff+ project, the trust invested in a dedicated recruitment and marketing strategy for the medical bank. In practice they found the most important part was word of mouth, eg consultants reaching out to previous trainees, particularly in hard-to-recruit specialties. They also actively targeted locums to come back and work for the bank instead.

They introduced a £250 bonus for anyone who referred a colleague (once they had worked 250 hours) and for every shift worked you accrued credits towards training courses.

Results: Within six months they recruited 332 doctors to the bank, including over 200 external locums.

Case study: East Cheshire NHS Trust medical bank

East Cheshire launched a recruitment campaign to actively recruit permanent bank staff and staff employed substantively at neighbouring trusts. They had a lot of success simply by advertising for free on NHS Jobs. At the same time they improved their staff offer, including introducing weekly pay for bank staff.

Results: East Cheshire has successfully put over 60 junior doctors on their medical bank across a range of departments, including 11 for A&E. This is a considerable proportion of their junior doctor workforce (total staff is only 3,000).
Step 5: Engagement

**Objective:** To ensure buy in from all relevant staff and maximise effectiveness through integrated working/processes across directorates and disciplines.

- Where staff banks are most effective, there is strong engagement and interdisciplinary working among key staff. This means engaging clinicians, ward/temporary staffing managers, HR and finance.

- A culture of openness and shared access to data and management information on temporary staffing is a key platform for this engagement and collaboration.

- As discussed in the previous steps, engaging staff on the benefits of working for bank and the importance for the trust of using bank over agency is an important part of maximising the bank’s effectiveness.

- It’s important to also consider engagement and collaboration with **local partners**, for example neighbouring trusts, HR director networks, regional streamlining programmes and sustainability and transformation partnerships. This is explored further in Section 3 on collaborative banks.
Case study: East Cheshire NHS Trust

The Paybill Reduction Group at East Cheshire consists of the HR director, finance director, deputy medical director and a senior nurse. The group meets weekly to review data, policies and processes on establishment, recruitment and retention, staff costs and agency booking trends, and commissions reviews of workforce policies and processes (e.g., leave booking processes).

Results: Since it was set up, the group has significantly improved the quality of data collected and harmonised rostering, leave, and bank and agency booking processes to improve staff deployment across the trust.

Case study: Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust medical bank

Leeds has focused efforts to reduce reliance on medical locums on increasing staff engagement.

This has meant engaging:
- with departments to raise awareness of their spend on medical agency staff and the role of the bank
- with long-term agency staff to encourage them to move into bank or substantive roles
- across their region via the West Yorkshire Association of Acute Trusts, including establishing a collaborative bank and taking a more co-ordinated approach to reducing agency spend. This has improved trust and collaboration between the organisations.

Results: They are filling 70-80% of all medical temporary shifts through the bank, compared to just 20-30% fill rate five years ago.
3. Collaborative banks

Why introduce a collaborative bank?

Through ongoing conversations with trusts and STPs, we have identified a number of common motivations for introducing a collaborative bank.

**Reduce agency spend**
By maximising their use of bank, trusts can reduce their agency and overall temporary staffing spend.

**Share back-office costs**
Trusts can streamline back-office costs through a collaborative bank with shared back-office functions or by investing collectively in technological platforms.

**Increase transparency**
When operating as a collaborative bank, trusts can increase transparency on use of agency and bank across their region to maximise value for money across the patch. Some banks are exploring the alignment of rates across a region. Trusts should seek legal advice when setting up these arrangements to ensure they are robust and lawful. The Competition and Markets Authority offers a [helpful guide](#) to avoiding anti-competitive behaviour.

**Increase supply**
Collaborative banks across a number of trusts will create a larger pool of bank staff and help trusts improve their bank fill rates, ie use of bank over agency.
Emerging models of collaborative banks

There is no ‘one size fits all’ model for collaborative banks. They can cover a specific staff group or all staff groups. They can stretch across two trusts or as wide as an STP or a region.

**Models 1 and 2:**

Many trusts are using collaborative banks to consolidate back-office costs and invest in shared digital platforms to co-ordinate their temporary workforce. A shared cloud-based technology platform is essential to operate as a collaborative bank.

**Models 3 and 4:**

Trusts can either cascade shifts out to the bank workers employed by other trusts in the collaborative where their internal bank cannot fill the shift (model 3) or cascade bank shifts out to a shared pool of workers (model 4), eg employed via a joint venture. So far, model 3 is more common.

**Examples include:**

- Cheshire and Merseyside’s collaborative bank (models 1 and 3, live Q4)
- Northumbria’s FlexiShift (models 1 and 3, live Q3)
- Hertfordshire ‘bank network’ (models 1 and 3, live).
Getting started

1. STP HR directors and directors of finance sign up to the project
2. Resource allocation
3. Agree terms of reference (ToR)/memorandum of understanding (MoU)/project governance
4. Diagnostic: current state assessment and analysis
5. Options appraisal: identify opportunities
6. Review and refine ToR/MoU/project governance /escalation points
7. Kickstart pilots-proof of concept
8. Benefits realisation – what is the end game? What does success look like?
9. Do, learn, review

Source: Cheshire and Merseyside collaborative bank case study
Establishing effective collaborative banks

Lessons learnt from Cheshire and Merseyside collaborative bank

1. Early MOU and data-sharing agreement
2. Engagement and commitment
3. Benefits realisation linked to Carter
4. One size may not fit all
5. Build on existing work and be flexible to extend scope as project evolves and matures
6. Technological investment with integrated solutions
7. Cross-corporate function input required
8. Agreed STP approach to workforce supply
9. Alignment to streamlining programme
10. Dedicated resource to drive delivery