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NHS England and NHS Improvement are working in partnership with NHS Employers to support trusts to improve their retention. Using the combined workforce expertise in both organisations, we are developing a range of resources and materials available across both websites.

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Foreword

Ruth May, Chief Nursing Officer

I am delighted to be publishing our revised retention resource. Since we started the retention collaborative we have seen tremendous progress from the trusts that have participated.

We have been overwhelmed by how keen our colleagues in trusts are to share their retention initiatives and resources with others and, as a result, our Retention Hub includes some outstanding material, signposted in this updated improvement guide.

The great energy from trusts for sharing ideas and resources has been wonderful to see and has directly contributed to widespread adoption of excellent retention initiatives across the NHS and the positive retention results we have seen across England.

Danny Mortimer, Chief Executive, NHS Employers

NHS Employers has been pleased to work with Ruth May and her team to ensure that employers take action to improve retention.

Through the focused NHS England and NHS Improvement support programme and the wider NHS Employers programme we have seen real focus in particular on supporting new starters, developing nurse careers and supporting flexibility (by which our people tend to mean predictability).

Together with the recent substantial investment in pay, improvements in migration policy and restoration of CPD funding, these actions are starting to make a real difference to our people, teams and patients.
Introduction

One of the national retention programme’s main aims is to share best practice ideas and resources between trusts across England. Both NHS Employers and NHS Improvement published improvement resources to help facilitate this sharing, and since their publication, we have built the Retention Hub.

The hub is designed to be a one-stop shop for case studies and trust-developed resources, which are categorised under the themes listed on this page.

This guide acts as a brochure to all the amazing case studies and resources trusts have developed and donated.

The guide is only a subset of what is included on our hub, so please do regularly visit the hub to check out our new case studies and trust retention resources.

Whenever you see this icon in the document, you can click the link to find the resource on our improvement hub.

Developing a retention strategy
Effective use of data and diagnostics
Supporting new starters and newly qualified staff
Flexible working to support work-life balance
Supporting the experienced workforce
Career planning and development
Health and wellbeing, rewards and benefits
Staff engagement and communication

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Making the NHS the best place to work is a key commitment in both the NHS Long Term Plan and the NHS People Plan. The ideas in this guide empower our leaders to provide greater development, flexibility and support options to our staff, which all contribute to a more supportive working environment, and lead to greater retention of our staff.

Baroness Dido Harding
Chair, NHS Improvement
Developing a retention strategy

There are several ways to create an effective retention strategy:

- Use ready-made templates and frameworks, including driver diagrams and SMART aims, to diagnose potential areas of focus.
- Ensure that all staff can understand and embed the trust’s retention strategy into their work, through the development of a retention framework or guide for teams and managers.
- Draw together multiple workstreams into one coherent strategy and communicate it to staff clearly.
- Understand the importance of retention as an investment, and learn from others.
- Hire from within to create a sustainable workforce.

CASE STUDY:
Stabilising retention during change
Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Essex Partnership developed its retention strategy while going through a merger – its commitment to retaining staff and ability to stay on task during such a difficult period is testament to its excellent retention strategy.

RESOURCE:
What do nurses want?
Infographic based on a survey of nurses, by NHS Employers

This infographic, based on a survey of over 500 nurses, clearly articulates the six most important factors when looking for a new role, and the six most important factors that could influence a nurse to stay in a role. The insight, and resources attached, can be invaluable when developing a retention strategy, but it is important to understand what your own staff value.
Effective use of data and diagnostics

CASE STUDY:
Using data to improve nurse turnover
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

In this case study by NHS Employers, you can explore how Buckinghamshire Healthcare used data to reduce its nursing turnover by 2%. It contains tips regarding data quality and how to use different types of data, and above all emphasises how important it is to approach an exercise like this in a collaborative way.

VIDEO:
Using staff insight to retain staff
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

This video outlines how Greater Manchester worked to improve retention of its staff by striving to understand why they wanted to leave: by interrogating its own data gathered from sources such as exit interviews, Greater Manchester could develop an effective retention strategy.

Understanding the profile of your workforce and the reasons they leave is an essential part of developing an effective retention strategy. See below for suggestions on how to do this:

- Understand the demographics you’re working with by undertaking an age profiling exercise
- Explore the potential of exit surveys to get a better understanding of the reasons your staff are leaving.

For more information on how to effectively use data and diagnostics to develop a targeted retention plan, visit the theme page on the retention improvement hub.
Find out why your workforce are leaving, identify high-turnover areas and gain an understanding of your workforce demographics – these are key elements to developing a strong retention plan, and can only be achieved by undertaking a detailed diagnostic of your workforce data.

Jonathon King, Principal Workforce Insight Lead and a Programme Lead for the Retention Programme NHS England and NHS Improvement

Understanding our data was crucial to understanding and addressing the trust’s recruitment and retention challenges. By gaining a better understanding of both why people left the trust and what development opportunities might have encouraged them to stay, we were able to tailor our strategy to the specific needs of our staff.

Helen Lycett, Strategic Trust Lead for Allied Health Professions, West London NHS Trust
Supporting new starters and newly qualified staff

Supporting new starters is key to improving retention – in the 2018/2019 financial year, 18.8% of all clinical staff who left their organisation were in their first year of employment there. Here are some initiatives to consider when looking to retain new starters:

- **Reduce attrition in pre-qualified staff** by understanding why it happens and introducing attractive support packages for new starters.

- Reduce vacancies and drop-outs by simplifying your recruitment process, perhaps using assessment centres.

- **Gather data on your current induction** to understand if new staff feel welcomed and supported.

- Consider your preceptorship offer – some trusts have increased this to two years.

**CASE STUDY:**

‘Gateshead Guardians’
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

Gateshead gave its experienced staff members an opportunity to support and mentor new starters, and in doing so reduced turnover of newly qualified nurses in their first 12 months while ensuring that experienced staff felt valued and appreciated.

**CASE STUDY:**

Improving midwifery preceptorship with a midwifery development pathway
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

University Hospitals Birmingham developed a new preceptorship structure for newly qualified midwives, with better clarity and explanation of the offer. As a result, 92% of staff found their preceptorship experience beneficial, and the Care Quality Commission found that student midwives intended to stay on with UHB.

Visit our Retention Improvement Hub to see more examples of best practice in supporting your new starters and newly qualified staff.
This added support mechanism has been really beneficial to my development.

Newly qualified nurse, six months into preceptorship
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust

Many of us ‘older nurses’ still have a lot of experience to offer the trust, and to feel we are still appreciated is very important.

Nutrition nurse consultant and guardian with over 30 years’ experience in practice
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust
Flexible working to support work-life balance

Having an attractive flexible working offer is an effective way of making your staff feel more supported. There are many ways to approach this:

- Consider the range of different flexible working options, including term-time contracts, part-time, job shares, annualised hours, compressed hours, career breaks and remote working
- Ensure your policy is up to date and easily accessible to staff
- Ensure transparency on how flexible working opportunities are allocated
- Investigate the possibility of implementing new e-rostering software and improve rostering practice more generally
- Consider an annualised hour contract system to give staff more flexibility when booking time off, and how you might maximise the potential of annualised hours by supporting your staff to pursue aspirations and ambitions like nursing abroad.

For more information about flexible working and the different approaches other organisations have made, visit the theme page on our retention improvement hub.

**RESOURCE:**

Flexible working guide and poster
Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

This guide provides detailed descriptions of the flexible working opportunities offered by Essex Partnership, and the accompanying poster is a good example of how to effectively communicate a supportive initiative to staff.

**COLLECTION:**

Focus on flexible working
NHS Employers

This web page contains a number of invaluable resources on flexible working, including NHS Employers’ flexible working guide, trust examples and case studies, and other tools and resources. It also includes a recording of a webinar hosted by NHS Employers, designed to share best practice regarding flexible working.
Supporting the experienced workforce

Below are some examples of how organisations can strive to make their experienced staff feel supported and valued:

- Ensure that staff and managers understand the potential of flexible retirement options.
- Consult the appropriate guidance on what you can offer to these staff groups.
- Develop an action plan to ensure that the experienced workforce feel valued.

Visit the experienced workforce theme page to find more guidance and information on supporting your experienced workforce.

CASE STUDY:
Flexible retirement options for the workforce
Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

The first of two resources is a case study on Southend’s approach to flexible retirement options for its workforce. The trust had identified that a large proportion of its workforce would be eligible to retire shortly. The second is a case study on its engagement strategy in delivering its retention plan.

COLLECTION:
Menopause and the workplace
NHS Employers

Menopause is an issue that will affect a large proportion of the NHS workforce – this collection by NHS Employers contains resources and case studies designed to improve understanding and support of menopause in the workplace.

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Career planning and development

Ensuring that staff feel like they have a future with your organisation is key to retaining them – initiatives relating to career progression appeared in 83.5% of direct support programme trust retention plans. See below for some examples of these initiatives:

- Ensure staff know and understand the opportunities available to them, perhaps by developing a brochure.
- Create opportunities for staff to experience different areas and specialties without having to apply for a new role, maybe through a ‘transfer window’ or ‘staff passport’ scheme.
- Offer guidance and advice to ambitious staff who are unsure of what steps they can take – some trusts have achieved this by developing ‘career clinics’.
- Develop innovative career pathways, like Brighton and Sussex posters and Royal Berkshire leaflets.
- Offer flexibility in nursing careers via internal rotation and internal transfer.

Visit the ‘career planning and development’ page on our Retention Improvement Hub to see other resources related to this theme.
Health and wellbeing, rewards and benefits

Staff who feel valued and rewarded by their organisation are more likely to be happy and well in their workplace. There are a number of ways you can approach this:

- Evaluate whether your organisation is a ‘healthy workplace’
- Make strategic use of your reward offers to become a more attractive workplace
- Review whether your current offers are appropriately addressing recruitment and retention challenges
- Strive to improve overall staff health and wellbeing by assessing your existing strategy
- Engage with staff to develop an inclusive and caring environment.

To see more resources designed to support your organisation’s efforts to improve staff health and wellbeing, visit the theme page on our Retention Improvement Hub.

CASE STUDY:
Developing a benefits brochure to improve induction, recruitment and staff engagement
Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust

While this brochure is an excellent example of the type of benefits trusts can offer, it also serves as an example of how you can effectively communicate your offer to staff.

CASE STUDY:
Using reward as part of an effective recruitment strategy
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust and NHS Employers

This case study, developed in partnership with NHS Employers, explores how North Devon revamped its recruitment strategy to include a more attractive reward offer. Making your organisation a more attractive employer will often serve to improve retention as well as recruitment.
Staff engagement and communication

Engaging with staff is key to understanding how to address retention challenges. Here are some examples of how to do this:

- Some trusts have improved their branding to communicate their retention strategy more effectively.
- Improving quality through staff engagement ensures that patients are safe and staff are happy.
- Revitalise your ‘brand’ and make use of social media to engage with staff and make them feel like they are truly part of your organisation.

For more resources with information on communicating and engaging with staff more effectively, visit the theme page on our Retention Improvement Hub.

CASE STUDY:

Using staff engagement and marketing
Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust

Tameside and Glossop focused on staff engagement after doing its data diagnostic to understand its retention challenges. One of its key solutions was to develop a positive and supportive trust identity, encapsulated by the social media movement #teamTameside

RESOURCE:

Improving staff retention: key conversations to have with your staff
NHS Employers

This resource offers guidance on how and when to have certain ‘key conversations’ with your staff, including ‘stay conversations’ and ‘itchy feet conversations’. It is designed to support managers in ensuring that their staff feel listened to, and that they have channels of communication open to them.
Next steps

The results have been great and thank you to the trusts that have worked hard to deliver. The recent publication of the Interim NHS People Plan highlights that there is more we can do in support of better retention. We hope that this resource and the case studies, guidance and best practice within have given you some ideas to use when creating and developing your own retention strategy. The work done so far on retention has been hugely impressive - not just at reducing the numbers and percentages in relation to turnover and vacancies, but at making our staff feel valued and supported so that the NHS is truly the best place to work. Staff will stay if they feel comfortable to do so, and it is the responsibility of everyone in the NHS to strive for a workplace that is compassionate and welcoming to all. Looking after our people is the key to retention, better staff wellbeing, and quality patient care.
Thank you

If you:

- have any questions
- have work or resources you would like to share
- have any suggestions for the team

please contact us at nhsi.workforce@nhs.net and join the conversation using #NHSRetention