

NHS electronic staff record

How to ensure allied health professions are coded correctly

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Introduction

The NHS's workforce is its largest asset, accounting for about 70% of its total costs. The electronic staff record (ESR) contains information essential for effective workforce planning.

Allied health professionals (AHPs) form the NHS's third largest clinical workforce, but understanding of how they can contribute to transforming care is limited. One reason for this is that ESR is not perceived as accurately reflecting the profession's staffing position.

All AHPs can influence how ESR is used to best effect. This guide will help AHP services ensure their workforce data in ESR is accurate and consistent. It describes steps to reflect the current staffing position in ESR, encouraging AHPs to engage with colleagues in other departments to keep data precise and up to date.

Did you know? ESR provides an integrated HR and payroll system for NHS organisations. Trusts use it to hold data for about 1.4 million staff.

Effective workforce planning is essential if the NHS is to supply the staff to meet changing healthcare needs. ESR can support local, regional and national workforce planning if the information in it is accurate.

NHS Improvement's Model Hospital uses ESR information, so to make full use of benchmarking it is essential that ESR accurately reflects the AHP staffing position.

Why is it important to address ESR?

ESR is the means by which the workforce is recorded and counted. As with other staff groups, it is critical that the NHS can understand the current position and direction of the AHP workforce and report on it reliably at a local, regional and national level.

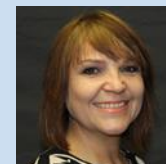


Dr Jo Fillingham – Clinical Director, Allied

Health Professionals: “In 2014, Quality Watch, focusing on AHPs, asked: ‘Can we measure quality of care?’ One key finding was

the need to improve ‘the scope, consistency and availability of routine data’ because it ‘will be important to understanding the contribution that AHPs make to high quality care’. Making decisions about effective day-to-day workforce management, and future workforce requirements, needs accurate and timely data which depicts the AHP workforce profile in ESR. Chief AHPs and AHP leads, I encourage you to use this guide to ensure that ESR reflects the AHP workforce. This is crucial to evidence the delivery of high quality, productive care.”

Roz Campbell – AHP Professional Lead, Workforce Productivity:



“ESR is the principal electronic workforce system for the NHS. It provides NHS organisations with a range of tools that facilitate effective workforce management and planning. However, there is a perception that the effectiveness and reliability of ESR is compromised because of the inaccuracies of the data held within it.”



ESR is more than a payroll system

All staff should ensure their personal information is accurately reflected in ESR. Equally important, the system must reflect the AHP workforce accurately. ESR has a variety of functions:

- Generating operational management information to inform workforce planning.
- Informing talent management strategies, which contribute to staff retention and health and wellbeing.
- Support with compliance, including mandatory and statutory training and interfaces with the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). HCPC information is now linked to ESR: since November 2018 ESR users can see HCPC registration information, updated weekly. This can be used to check AHPs are registered with their professional body and help prevent lapsed registration issues.
- Understanding staff retention – helping identify where staff come from, where they go when they leave, and why. If you understand this, you will be able to more effectively address the key issues that should form your recruitment and retention strategy.
- All arm's length bodies (ALBs) use ESR information for official statistics and parliamentary questions, workforce planning, equality and diversity monitoring and employment policy monitoring.

Did you know?



ESR is the primary data source for NHS staff information. NHS Improvement uses it, for example, for the Model Hospital, National Retention Improvement Programme and the Sickness Improvement Programme.

Many workforce programmes are based on information recorded in ESR, so it is essential the data reflects the workforce to enable strategic decision-making and focus effort where it is needed.



Be AHP, be counted

As the NHS's third largest workforce, AHPs comprise an array of professions that make a significant contribution to patient care.

What you said... *“The foundations of our services are built on the electronic staff record. Our people are important to us but also their unique offer to the care and treatment they provide to our patients. We believe that working through ESR will not only make sure our AHPs 'count' but are also able to be 'counted'. As AHPs, we are present and busy working to improve people's lives and outcomes from treatment, but we want to have more robust conversation and deliver more impact and understanding of our unique offer to the trust and our healthcare system. Once we are finished, we will be able to plan for the future and propose sustainable solutions to the needs of our local populations.”*

Glenn Westrop – Senior Service Development Advisor, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Did you know?



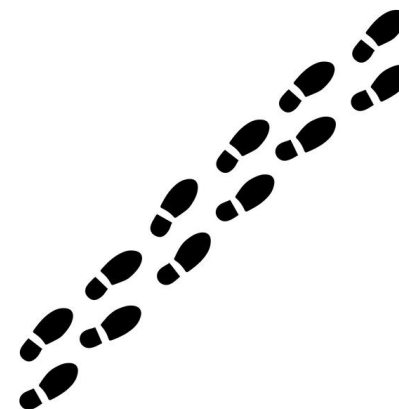
As clinical experts, you can influence the workforce values held in ESR to ensure that occupation codes, job roles and area-of-work values remain fit for purpose.

You can email NHS Digital with suggestions and feedback (enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk) or discuss potential changes with your ESR lead.

Seven steps to improving ESR

This guide advises AHP clinical leads on what they can do to improve ESR data quality with support from trust colleagues.

- 1 Using manager self-service
- 2 Using employee self-service
- 3 Staffing information – checking your own and team information
- 4 Ensuring staffing information is linked
- 5 Do your processes support ESR?
- 6 Keeping ESR accurate – whose responsibility is it?
- 7 Checklist of actions



What you said... *“From the inside, I know how hard we work as AHPs and the ‘on the ground’ resources we are working with... but without accurate ESR data, no-one externally can see a true representation of the AHP workforce within our trust and the outstanding care we provide.”* **Morgan Lowe – Physiotherapy Team Leader and Chief Nurse Clinical Fellow, Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**



Step 1 – Using manager self-service (1/2)

The ESR system comprises several modules that update and maintain ESR. One is manager self-service, which managers can use to notify ESR of changes so it accurately reflects the staffing position.

GETTING STARTED

Essentials for getting the most out of manager self-service:

- Get logged in – contact your ESR local administrator to ask about access.
- Review your work structures and ensure the system is set up for the right people to have access to the right things.
- Access it regularly – keeping on top of workflows and notifications will make ESR easier to manage, but more importantly will ensure it accurately reflects your AHP workforce.

How can it be used?

Enable authorised users to make changes through proxy access.

View upcoming events for employees: for example, appraisals, annual leave, learning and expiry dates for professional registrations.

Colour co-ordinated absence calendars can help manage absence and customise absence triggers to help you support staff with sickness absence.

Help manage employees' career paths.

View the total paybill of the teams that form your work structures.

Track staff movements (starters and leavers).



Step 1 – Using manager self-service (2/2)

Access within your organisation will depend on its level of rollout. Benefits of manager self-service include:

- viewing employment and contact information for all employees in your hierarchy
- a range of portlets showing key workforce information that gives managers greater control over their workforce data and targets
- interactions between employees and managers, such as annual leave requests and appraisals, are handled via workflow notifications emailed to individuals.



If you need to make a lot of changes, you can use a mass update function – for example, for moving staff from one cost centre/organisation to another, or moving a number of people from one position to another due to error or a change in the national dataset. To use this function, your ESR lead can raise a service request to support the changes.

Did you know?



You can find out who your local ESR systems administrator is by using this link:

<http://www.esrsupport.co.uk/access.php>

This will help you make an initial contact in your trust to support you with ESR.



Step 2 – Using employee self-service (1/2)

The most efficient way of maintaining personal records is to use employee self-service. This enables staff to update records with their personal information. Employees can access self-service whenever they choose, either at work or via any device that can access the internet.

What can employees do in ESR?

- View and update personal information.
- View pay and reward information.
- View payslips and absence information.



Did you know?

Employees planning to leave can now initiate the termination process on ESR. When they submit their resignation, ESR sends a notification to their manager for approval.

What are the benefits?

- Self-service functionality enables every ESR user to manage their own data.
- Accuracy, quality and timeliness of information.
- Self-service encourages the employee to feel they own their personal and professional data.
- Once employees take ownership of their data, it can remove the need for paper-based changes.
- Flow of information is streamlined, consistent and instantly available.



Step 2 – Using employee self-service (2/2)

ESR self-service provides functions to help employees manage their record and ensure their personal information is up to date. It can be accessed via a computer but is also supported by a mobile application.

How it can be used?

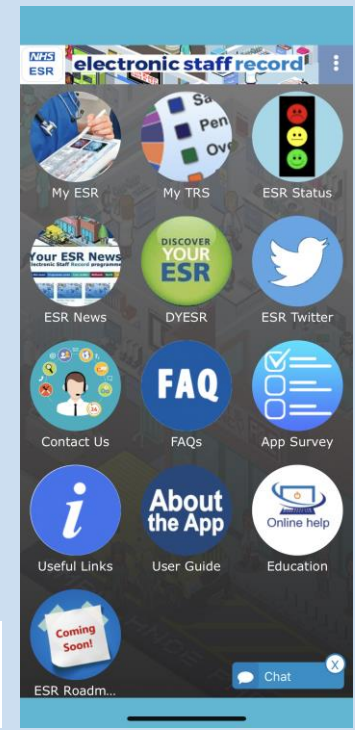
- Amend home address, bank details and emergency contacts.
- View and print PDFs of payslips and P60s.
- View total reward statements.
- View and enrol onto learning opportunities.
- Record disability, diversity, equality information.
- Participate in appraisals.
- Apply for annual leave.

ESR app

The ESR app is easy to use across Apple, Android and Blackberry devices.

The My ESR app can be downloaded by searching for “ESR NHS”. Username and password will be required to log in to ESR itself.

The ESR app is available on Apple, Android and Windows-based phones:





Step 3 – Checking information (1/2)

GETTING STARTED: essentials for getting the most out of ESR

- Can you identify all your staff?
- Are there staff reporting to you whom you cannot report on or see in manager self-service?
- Do staff have the right occupational codes?
- When you review the data, consider whether ESR would benefit from more occupation codes.

How are your staff organised?

Work structures inform how you will report locally. Staff within services and job positions form part of these structures; they are usually decided between HR and finance. However, the clinical lead's needs should be considered, as well as payroll's.

Positions will have common attributes such as job title, occupation code and area of work. Positions can be used multiple times: ie one post = two or more employees. This information can then be used for reporting. Attributes such as occupation code are commonly used for reporting nationally.

What's available to help me check information is correct?

WoVEn – Workforce Validation Engine is a monthly data quality report for NHS organisations, flagging potential issues and enabling them to correct data at source.

ESR BI – If you are recognised as a manager by ESR Business Intelligence, you will be able to run your own reports detailing staffing. Workforce information specialists will have access to additional reports, such as the workforce information verifier.

Contact your ESR systems administrator, who will help you with reporting requirements or direct you to someone who can.



Step 3 – Checking information (2/2)

How do I reflect staff who work in more than one profession/area?

A staff member can have multiple assignments: for example, they may be registered in two or more professions or be a therapy assistant who supports two or more professions. ESR can record these instances through multiple assignments – for example, roles assigned to different cost centres due to the nature of the work, such as someone who is a physiotherapy assistant for 60% of the time and an occupational therapy assistant for 40%.

What are the benefits of setting up staff in ESR in this way?

- You can reliably report on staff in each specific area.
- The organisation hierarchy is the means in which staff are organised to reflect reporting lines, ensuring you only see those staff you are responsible for within manager self-service.
- This information will help you organise staffing for planning, developing and transforming the workforce.



Positions can be used to group together a number of staff with the same role, helping you organise the roles in your organisation and reduce the burden of maintaining multiple professions.



Did you know?



NHS occupation codes cover the full list of NHS specialties and are intended to help consistent reporting. The National Workforce Data Set is available here:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-sets/national-workforce-data-set-nwd-and-nhs-occupation-codes>

Step 4 – Linking staffing information (1/2)



Although ESR can record establishment, most organisations rely on establishment controls that are not linked to ESR. Establishment control is the formal process for matching information on an organisation's funded posts to details of the staff employed in them. This can often be challenging as the two systems (establishment and staff in post) are managed by the finance and HR departments respectively, but it brings benefits.

'Budgeted establishment' refers to the pay budget allocated to a resource: this is your total funding. You can view it as one person or a team whose members may have different contractual arrangements but together form a staff-in-post position.



Did you know?

Any new role is a change to the budgeted establishment, which is marked by the creation of a new role in ESR. There is a constant need to reconcile the systems.



If your establishment is not linked, it is important to ensure:

- you fully understand the organisation's workforce and structures, working with finance and HR
- scheduled checks are in place to ensure that the ESR and the establishment (ledger) correspond.

Step 4 – Linking staffing information (2/2)



Linking ESR and budgeted establishment – the benefits:

- Effective establishment controls are in place between managers, finance and HR.
- Real-time analysis for all parties involved in budgeted establishment.
- Improved financial control of positions and workforce costs.
- Provides a transparent view of notional vacancies.
- ALBs can directly access correct and current information through the ESR Data Warehouse.
- Reduces errors and time needed to correct ESR and the financial ledger.

The Establishment Control System is part of the ESR full integrated package, available at no extra cost. It is possible to do establishment control entirely within ESR.

What you said... *“Attending the NHS Improvement AHP regional event in October 2018 prompted me to start working with my organisation’s workforce team to ensure our AHP ESR data is correct. I had identified that there were inaccuracies in our data, but I hadn’t really understood the potential implications of this. The session from the allied health professions workforce improvement lead highlighted how important it was to get the ESR data correct to inform workforce planning. I am now working with my trust’s workforce intelligence manager to identify inaccuracies and agree consistent coding for our AHP workforce skill mix. This isn’t just about workforce planning, as it links with work we are undertaking regarding job planning and productivity so the data has to be accurate.”*

Sally Judges – Head of Allied Health Professions and Healthy Lifestyles, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust



Step 5 – Ensuring processes support ESR (1/2)

At several points in the employee 'life cycle', the employee's situation will change (eg working arrangements, career break). It is vital that ESR is kept from the start of employment through to the end of the employee's role, including exit and retirement.

At the start of the employee life cycle:

- Get it right first time. Although your HR department will have a clear view of the normal conventions for coding, ensure staff are recorded as you would expect them to be. Be prepared to confirm and challenge conventions using your clinical expertise.
- HR will be responsible for setting up the position on ESR, which will hold vital information for future reporting.
- Take extra care if it is a new role or one that has recently been changed – check that your HR colleagues are clear about what makes the role different from others and the most appropriate approach to defining the role.

You may not have all the technical answers available, but a brief discussion about the role will help HR understand how you wish it to be coded.

- You are the clinical expert. Don't assume HR will understand every professional role in the same detail you do, but your skills combined will go a long way to ensuring ESR is accurate.

Did you know? You can find out who your ESR lead is using this link:

<http://www.esrsupport.co.uk/access.php>





Step 5 – Ensuring processes support ESR (2/2)

During the recruitment life cycle:

- Regularly check staffing reports.
- Ensure the general ledger is accurate.
- Have there been any role changes and are these reflected?
- Remember to record leave – whether annual, maternity, adoption, parental – on ESR.



The position when set up will include occupation code, area of work and job

role. These are key fields used in reporting – it is crucial to refer to relevant user guides when allocating these values. Guides from NHS Digital are available from:

National Workforce Data Sets –

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-sets/national-workforce-data-set-nwd-and-nhs-occupation-codes>

At the end of the employee life cycle:

- On receiving the resignation letter, begin the trust process for notifying leavers as soon as possible. Any delays may lead to overpayment.
- Employees can now trigger their own leaver's process through employee self-service. However, be sure to continue processing this on receipt through manager self-service.
- When an employee resigns, consider asking them if they would be interested in joining the staff bank.
- If the employee is retiring, is there an opportunity to consider flexi-retirement options?
- Responding to leavers' notifications quickly can help you start recruitment promptly and enable functions such as HR to support you sooner.



Step 6 – Keeping ESR accurate: whose responsibility? (1/2)

All staff are responsible for ensuring ESR reflects the NHS's most important asset, its workforce. They need to ensure that ESR is updated and reflects the workforce's ever-changing requirements. If you find an opportunity for development (ie new role, new occupational code), first discuss it with your AHP senior team to make sure it is viable and consider the impact on all professions that make up the AHP workforce.

What you can do locally:

- Link with your ESR lead.
- Review your staffing data.
- Are your management reporting lines correct in ESR?
- Are staff using self-service, and how can you as a manager promote its use?

What you can do regionally:

- Your ESR administrator can attend local special interest groups: ensure you link up to consider opportunities to improve functionality.

Nationally:

- Share with us anything you think would add value to the system, and we will signpost you to help progress it.

Did you know?

About 750 occupational codes cover the professions working in the NHS. See:

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/workforce/nhs-occupation-codes>

All staff shape and influence the content that forms the National Workforce Data Set (NWD). If you have questions on how a role should be coded or think codes could be revised or a new code developed, please contact:

enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk





Step 6 – Keeping ESR accurate: whose responsibility? (2/2)



All staff are responsible for influencing:

- new job roles and new occupation codes, as needs evolve
- quality of ESR data
- potential developments to the ESR system itself.

Working alongside your ESR expert is vital for applying coding accurately. Be sure to link with your recruitment lead on this too.

As a clinician, working with your ESR lead will help make ESR fit for purpose. But we encourage you to ask, is the issue a result of:

- how the system is engineered and built (ie software)?
- data quality issues (has the data become dated or irrelevant?)
- lack of capacity to record staffing information in the data options available?
- the process and infrastructure supporting ESR compromising the ability to keep the system accurate?



Step 7 – Checklist of actions (1/2)



ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- ✓ Link with your ESR lead and the process leads who contribute to updating ESR.
- ✓ Check your workforce information regularly and follow up actions.
- ✓ Feed back to your ESR lead any changes in professions that may affect ESR coding.
- ✓ Be smart in your improvement actions.

FOR AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT

STEP 1. Using manager self-service:

- Get logged in.
- Are the work structures correct?
- Are managers and supervisors using manager self-service?
- Access it regularly.

STEP 2. Using employee self-service:

- ✓ Enable staff to access self-service.
- ✓ Encourage staff to own their data and be responsible for keeping it accurate.
- ✓ Allow staff to make suggestions.



Step 7 – Checklist of actions (2/2)

FOR A MEDIUM-TERM IMPACT

STEP 3. Staffing information – checking your own and team information:

- ✔ Can you identify all your staff?
- ✔ Are staff coded correctly and are areas of work used?
- ✔ When reviewing staffing information, do the codes provide an adequate reflection of the AHP workforce?
- ✔ Is your ESR organised appropriately – are positions organised for grouping jobs?

STEP 4. Linking staffing information:

- Is staffing information accurate in ESR?
- Does the general ledger reflect the latest ESR position?
- Do you regularly check that the data in ESR and ledger corresponds?
- Consider using ESR's establishment control and reporting if you do not already do so.

FOR A LONG-TERM IMPACT

STEP 5. Do your processes support ESR?

- ✔ Ensure processes are linked – essential for making changes to process and implementing new approaches.
- ✔ Share your clinical expertise with colleagues who are responsible for administering the processes.
- ✔ Consider whether ESR is coded appropriately: are new occupational codes needed? Can some be retired?
- ✔ If current coding options do not represent the profession, consider how you can actively influence the National Workforce Data Set.

Online resources



- ESR Programme – <https://www.electronicstaffrecord.nhs.uk>
- Kbase (ESR knowledge base) – <https://www.electronicstaffrecord.nhs.uk/kbase/>
- National Workforce Data Sets – <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/data-collections-and-data-sets/data-sets/national-workforce-data-set-nwd-and-nhs-occupation-codes>
- National Workforce Data Sets – Occupational Coding – <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/areas-of-interest/workforce/nhs-occupation-codes>



ESR special interest groups

Regions nominate user representatives and their deputies for at least 12 months. Meetings take place quarterly.

- National Special Interest Group (TOR) for Self-Service and Human Resources:
<https://www.electronicstaffrecord.nhs.uk/kbase/afile/579/7796/>
- National Special Interest Group (TOR) for OLM/Talent Management:
<https://www.electronicstaffrecord.nhs.uk/kbase/afile/20/7424/>
- National Special Interest Group (TOR) for Payroll and Pensions:
<https://www.electronicstaffrecord.nhs.uk/kbase/afile/31/7515/>



Glossary

Term	What it means?
Work structures	A way of organising the system by grouping staff into teams and functions. Job positions are an example of organising staff in this way.
ESR systems administrator	Your locally identified lead responsible for the ESR system.
Job position	A means of grouping staff who share the same roles, sometimes referred to as bucket positions.
ESR HR	An ESR module where most staff information is recorded. Other modules include payroll.
Establishment	Often referred to as the general ledger, this is the means of recording the budgeted establishment/manpower. Will include vacant posts and posts where the role-holder may be on maternity leave or secondment.
ESR BI	Electronic staff record business intelligence

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