

Retaining our skilled workforce – introducing a careers clinic and transfer process to advance knowledge and skills, and develop a career pathway

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

What was the problem?

In 2014, nursing vacancies were at their highest level nationally for 15 years. UCLH recruited 648, but 443 left. Staff were unaware of in-house opportunities, while the assessment process could be off-putting and existing staff were occasionally overlooked.

What was the solution?

UCLH developed a retention and recruitment strategy to stem the flow of its nursing workforce by improving job satisfaction, morale and confidence, while maximising their capabilities to meet the patient needs and provide fulfilling job roles and career pathways. This included two nurse-led initiatives:

- a 'careers clinic' solely for registered nurses, offering employees professional career advice
- fast-tracked recruitment and transfer process for staff interested in a sideways move, reducing the complexity and time taken to fill vacancies.

What were the results?

During a three-month pilot in 2015, UCLH retained 43 band 5 and 6 nurses by holding 30 careers clinics and approving 13 internal transfers. Since then, some who were looking for outside posts received career advice or transferred internally:

- 52 nurses transferred internally to fill vacancies, saving £468,000 in recruitment costs and £329,000 in temporary staffing
- 75 nurses registered for transfer
- 85 nurses attended the careers clinic for learning and development opportunities.

All confirmed they were exploring new opportunities and looking outside of the organisation for other roles. In 2015 only 296 band 5 and 6 nurses left, compared to 443 in 2014. In 2015/16 UCLH's nursing vacancy level halved from 16% to just below 8%.

UCLH has trialled these initiatives with its nursing assistant workforce – another staff group with high

turnover. So far, seven nursing assistants have transferred to other specialties within the trust and 19 attended the careers clinic to explore available opportunities.

What were the learning points?

- Piloting allowed the trust to tweak ideas before committing time and resources to include other staff groups.
- Use live staff vacancy data to drive improvement: compare and monitor progress, and keep staff informed.
- Be flexible and adapt the approach: band 6 nurses were initially out of scope, then included due to demand.
- Keep communication channels open, listen and respond to staff concerns and remove obstacles in real time.

Find out more

Lorraine Szeremeta, Deputy Chief Nurse, lorraine.szeremeta@uclh.nhs.uk

Natalie Shamash, Project Lead, Natalie.Shamash@uclh.nhs.uk

Contact us

NHS Improvement
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

T: 0300 123 2257

E: enquiries@improvement.nhs.uk

W: improvement.nhs.uk

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