

# Maximising opportunities in Healthcare Recruitment – Six Top Tips



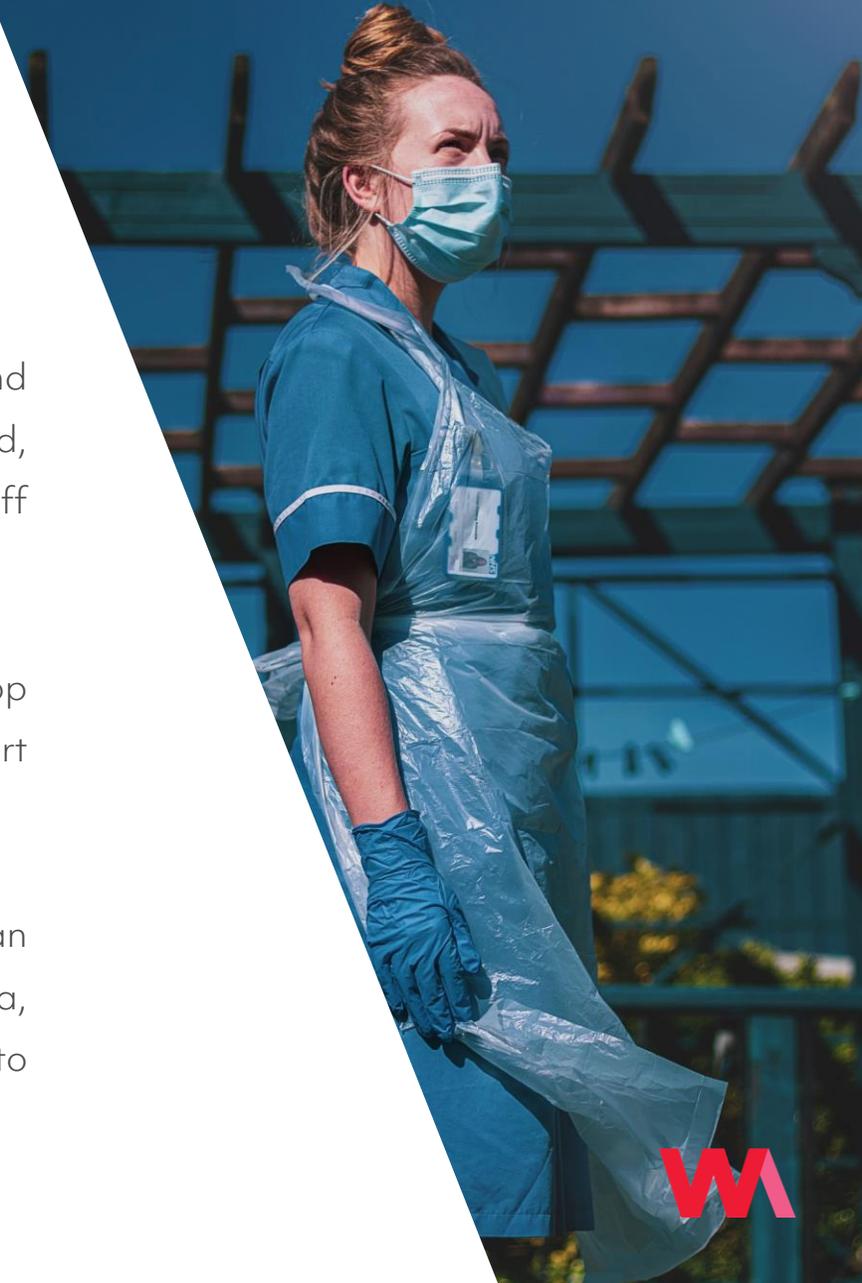
# The state of the market

First Brexit and now Covid-19 have reshaped the international recruitment market.

The combination of Brexit, which has slowed the inflow of EU medical workers to the UK, and coronavirus, which has all but halted the ability of international medical staff to move abroad, will mean the government will need to rapidly develop a strategy to tackle the NHS staff shortage.

Recruiters can use the current disruption to normal procedures to plan for the future and develop strategies for helping the NHS solve its current staffing challenges. They will be an essential part of the NHS staffing strategy, regardless of the form it takes.

Successful recruitment businesses must show themselves to be people-centric businesses that can think globally, anticipating the implications of the government's 'Global Britain' agenda, addressing historic media issues in a way that gives their NHS employers the confidence to entrust them with the scale of the challenge at hand.



# There is an urgent need to recruit across the NHS



Despite being the largest employer in the UK, with a 1.5m strong workforce, it's clear that the NHS needs more people.

When the pandemic struck, the NHS was already struggling to keep pace with growing demand. Long term difficulties NHS Trusts were having with recruitment made the staffing situation even more challenging.

In a Covid-19 environment, the long term NHS recruitment challenge is more important than ever. The NHS dealt capably with this spring's outbreak but at the cost of putting on hold most non-Covid-19 treatment and requiring NHS workers, retired medical staff and students to put in long hours in difficult conditions.

Public and media praise for the NHS is also turning into an expectation that healthcare workers are rewarded for their role in tackling the pandemic, and better supported in future.

“

*Nursing recruitment  
will be a huge priority,  
and the UK will need  
to go further than  
originally planned*

”

A photograph of a white envelope with a blue ribbon, a blue surgical glove, and a white paper with the text 'CORONAVIRUS STAY AT HOME PROTECT THE NHS SAVE LIVES'. The envelope is on a light-colored wooden surface. The paper is white with the text in green and black. The blue surgical glove is partially visible in the foreground. The blue ribbon is tied around the envelope. The white paper is partially open, showing the text. The background is a light-colored wooden surface.

UK Government  
**CORONAVIRUS**  
STAY AT HOME  
PROTECT THE NHS  
SAVE LIVES

# The government is under pressure to deliver on its manifesto commitments

This ambitious goal is unlikely to be enough.

The NHS had **44,000** vacant nursing posts advertised before the onset of coronavirus.

The long term decline in staffing numbers across the NHS means the government's pledge is unlikely to be enough to close the gap.



# 50,000

extra nurses through retention and recruitment by 2024

# 31,000

extra nurses recruited

# 19,000

nurses retained who would otherwise have left the profession

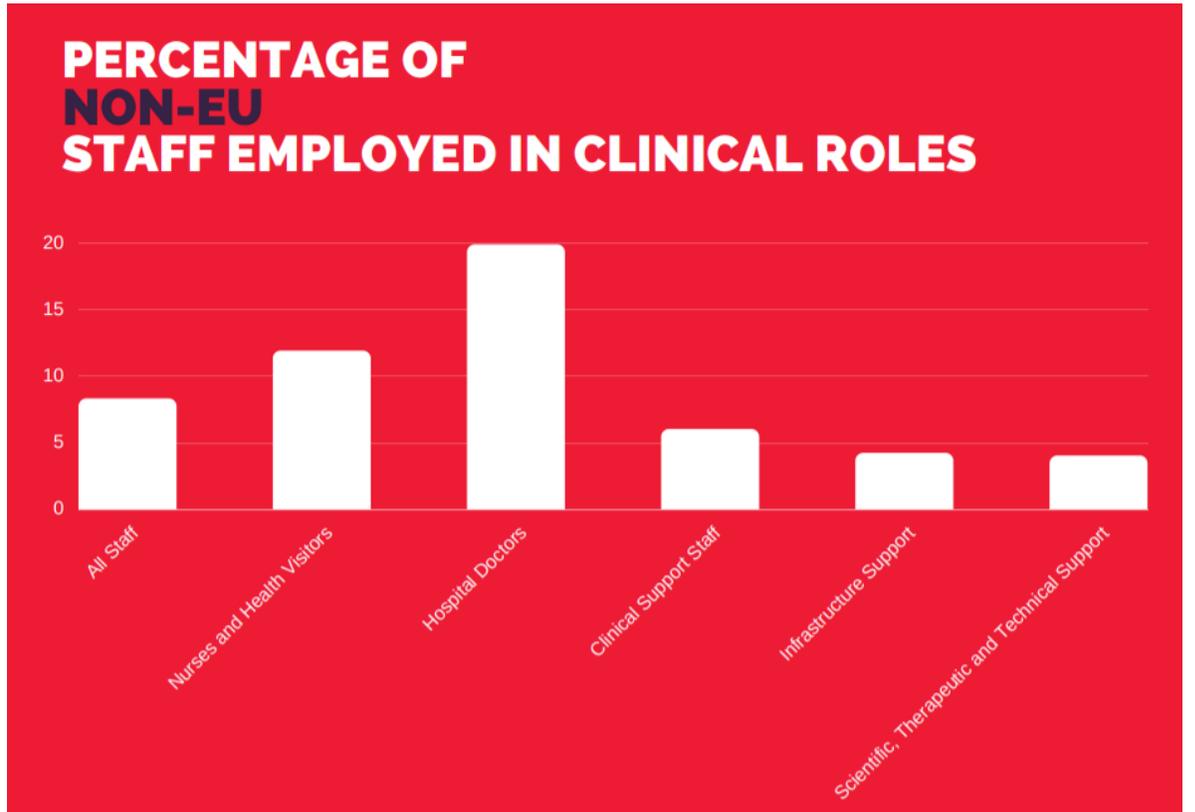
# International recruitment will be essential

According to a leaked model the government is planning to accelerate overseas recruitment.

A joint NHS England and NHS Improvement recruitment model leaked to the Health Service Journal at the end of 2019 lays bare how essential international recruitment will be.

Under the plans, NHS England would recruit 12,500 international nurses by 2024, requiring a minimum of 2,500 a year. If coronavirus makes this year's planned intake of international medical staff impossible to achieve, pressure will build on government to make up lost numbers in the coming years.

Research by the Health Foundation, the King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust has found that the NHS will need to recruit at least 5,000 international nurses a year to prevent a substantial further increase in unfilled posts.



# But scrutiny will be high

There continues to be strong interest in working for the NHS from nurses currently overseas, but recruitment from developing countries remains a politically sensitive issue in the UK.

There were fears that international recruitment could suffer as a result of Brexit.

But data from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the General Medical Council (GMC) show that the number of overseas medics registering in the UK increased in 2019, surpassing registration of UK nationals.

From a recruitment perspective, this is positive and demonstrates that, under normal circumstances, the desire to work in the UK remains high.



# International recruitment is not without its critics

A 2019 report by healthcare charity the Tropical Health and Education Trust concluded that the UK is “increasingly open to criticism for the impact its recruitment is having on low and middle-income countries”.

Danny Mortimer, Chief Executive of NHS Employers, has indicated the report will be taken into consideration as the NHS forms its recruitment strategy going forward.



# The opportunity

Healthcare recruiters will play a huge role in helping the NHS with nursing and other specialist recruitment.

The NHS will rely even more on healthcare recruitment agencies who understand the NHS environment and appreciate the sensitivities of our health recruitment market in the UK.

While the NHS continues to support trusts to recruit their own staff, NHS Employers maintains a database of approved third party recruiters, a clear indication that it understands it cannot meet the scale of the challenge alone.

The need for specialists on the ground means the NHS will always require outside expertise to fill any international staffing needs.



# Six recommendations for success



Healthcare recruiters will only be successful if they understand UK healthcare environment, and the sensitivities around overseas recruitment.

The NHS will rely even more on healthcare recruitment agencies who understand the NHS environment and appreciate the sensitivities of our health.

01

## Understand each NHS Trust is unique.

The most successful recruitment agencies will be those who take the time to understand the nature of regional recruitment difficulties and where demand for overseas workers is greatest.

04

## Demonstrate your ethics.

Scrutiny of some recruitment practices has been growing, meaning the risk of attracting criticism is higher. Actively demonstrating how your ethics drive your recruitment approach will help mitigate this risk.

02

## Embrace the bureaucracy of the NHS.

Developing sophisticated stakeholder mapping to make sure you target the right people is crucial to developing your relationships with the decision-makers that matter most.

05

## Show you are people-centric.

With scrutiny of recruiting from developing countries increasing, demonstrating you are focused on improving lives, rather than just minimising costs, will build trust with your buyers.

03

## Anticipate media attention.

Firms used by the NHS have been heavily scrutinised in the past. Presenting a case for responsive, intelligent recruiting that delivers value for money is essential.

06

## Think 'Global Britain'.

Post-Brexit trade deals will dominate the coming years, recognising the diplomatic tightrope the UK is walking will stand you in good stead to expand contracts and become a trusted partner of the NHS.

# Conclusion

The increased public expectation that the NHS be prioritised may mean the government chooses to allocate additional funding to the recruitment of staff to improve working conditions.

This will present opportunities for the recruitment industry, but government will be wary of media scrutiny of recruitment fees, meaning value for money will remain at the forefront of considerations. Presenting a case for responsive, intelligent recruiting that meets the needs of the NHS will make policymakers more willing to pay higher recruitment fees in the future than a continuation of the status quo.

Recruiters will be an essential part of the NHS staffing strategy, regardless of the form it takes. However, setting out a case for a new way of working that emphasises quality, ethics and adaptability will be most effective in developing lasting relationships with government and unlocking the additional funding necessary for ambitious staffing targets to be met.



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