

# Retaining our staff – a key to success in difficult times

This briefing provides an overview of the workforce retention challenges facing the NHS in Wales and the solutions, actions and initiatives that have been put in place across the service to respond to these challenges.

## Key Points

The NHS is the biggest employer in Wales, providing a significant contribution to both the national and local economy. The next five years will be a critical period of transformation in health and care services in Wales.

As highlighted in the [Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales](#) (the Parliamentary Review) it is vital that there is a sea-change in the way services are designed and delivered. The workforce is key to both driving change and putting the NHS in Wales on a sustainable footing.

People working within the NHS are our biggest asset. Without their hard work and dedication, the health and care service would collapse. We need to think about the workforce we have today for our current service delivery requirements but also focus on creating a pipeline for the future, which will include many of today's health and social care employees.

The key factors affecting the retention/staff experience of the workforce include:

- The NHS focusing on its current workforce and their ongoing development needs - more than 50% of today's workforce will still be working in the health service in 2033;
- Having efficient and robust recruitment processes and an effective induction;
- Supporting leadership, staff health and well-being, and staff engagement initiatives;
- The flexibility to manage work-life balance; approaches need to be in place to facilitate appropriate and supportive responses by organisations to those needs; and
- Effective management and development of future talent to ensure an engaged and adaptable workforce.

## Overview

Across the UK and Europe, workforce shortages in health are never far from the headlines. A recent report by Deloitte Centre for Health Solutions '[Time to care, Securing a future for the hospital workforce in Europe](#)' noted that *"despite decades of health workforce planning, education, recruitment and retention initiatives, most countries are facing increasing challenges with regards to demands placed on the workforce"*.

Whilst recent NHS Wales strategies and initiatives have been put in place to support recruitment and retention to ensure we have the right numbers of staff in place to meet the current and future needs of the population, we also need to ensure that there is a focus on the expertise and experience of the current workforce, which cannot be underestimated.

The workforce is the backbone of the NHS, with NHS Wales employing around 90,000 individual members of staff with an annual pay bill of approximately £3.5 billion. Retention of staff is a key issue for the NHS. Whilst organisations necessarily focus on their workforce supply to create a balanced recruitment pipeline, it is important that both new and existing staff are supported and encouraged to remain with their employer, particularly during difficult times.

The most cost-effective way to ensure NHS Wales has the staff we need in the future is to support and retain the people we already employ. More than 50% of today's workforce will still be working in the health service in 15 years' time and if we want to transform services over this period we need to support and develop today's healthcare workforce. As the Deloitte report highlights, *"maintaining high-quality care requires a focus on staff retention, including health and well-being and also support to develop new skills and competences"*. The Parliamentary Review also recognised this and highlighted the need to *"enrich the well-being, capability and engagement of the health and social care workforce"* as part of its recommendation to adopt the Quadruple Aim across health and social care services. The review added that *"Wales should aim to be a great place to train and work"*.

Increasingly, NHS Wales organisations are focussing on staff experience. They have developed a range of resources to ensure that there is support for the current workforce so as to hold on to valuable expertise and experience.

There are many reasons why people leave; such as pressure of work, lack of flexibility, level of pay or because some people feel they are not getting the career development they want.

All employers require a healthy level of staff turnover, but the challenge is to find the right balance between turnover and retention by understanding what is going on in organisations and within specific staff groups, teams and departments. Coupled with this is a recognition that different generations want different things in their working lives. Strategies and approaches to employment and deployment need to be in place, such as shift patterns designed to recognise particular needs and aspirations of individuals across different stages of their careers.

NHS Wales is focussing on the key interventions which need to be in place to support staff experience and the retention of a high-quality workforce, however there is no single action that will resolve staff retention issues. Retaining staff is the result of the combined actions which are taken by the organisation, and in particular improving staff experience. The following sections of this briefing highlight areas where specific focus is being placed, together with examples of initiatives and good practice within NHS Wales organisations.

***"More than 50% of today's workforce will still be working in the health service in 15 years' time..."***

## Knowing our workforce

There is a wealth of information available to highlight issues that need to be addressed on both an organisation-wide basis and for staff groups, operational areas and teams. NHS organisations are using this information to identify specific organisational issues to target solutions and changes to practice and behaviour.

The NHS Wales staff survey takes place approximately every two years and is the most comprehensive source of information on the opinions of our employees. Many organisations complement this large-scale approach with a series of short 'pulse surveys' focussed on particular issues at various intervals.

For example, Public Health Wales NHS Trust conducted a pulse survey specifically around areas of organisational improvement identified in its Staff Survey Action Plan to monitor the results.

Additionally, all-Wales turnover data has been collated and shared across organisations to facilitate local level review and planning to support the identification of particular hot spots and areas requiring specific focus. This includes benchmarking of turnover data within the NHS, on a pan-UK basis.

## Embedding the NHS Wales Core Principles

The Core Principles were launched by the Minister for Health and Social Services on 22nd February 2016. The Core Principles describe how staff can work together to make sure that what they do, and how they do it, is underpinned by a strong set of principles which is shared and understood by all staff.

The Core Principles are part of an ongoing commitment to strengthen the national and local values and behaviour frameworks, including Prudent Healthcare, already established across Health Boards and Trusts. They provide clarity and consistency about the expectations for everyone working in NHS Wales.

The Core Principles are:

- We put patients and users of our services first;
- We seek to improve our care;
- We focus on well-being and prevention;
- We reflect on our experiences and learn;
- We work in partnership and as a team; and
- We value all who work for the NHS.

### **'Be Our Best', Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST)**

The Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) created some key principles about how everyone can 'Be Our Best'. These included making sure that people are involved in deciding what it is they do and how they do it, as much as possible, as well as the importance of relationships.

Using these principles, they collaboratively developed a shared set of behaviours, which they captured in a visual graphic, alongside the organisation's vision and purpose. These are widely displayed across the Trust and are the basis of everything they do, including recruitment, selection, learning and development, appraisals and team meetings.

WAST have found that *"by simply capturing how we will behave, how we want each other to behave and committing ourselves to our behaviours, we will have less conflict and greater engagement, improved wellness, better productivity and increased quality"*. Ultimately, these shared behaviours are leading to better relationships between colleagues, with partners and with the communities that WAST serves.

## Engaging with managers and staff

The Kings Fund has been working on leadership models and staff engagement and experience in the NHS and recent [research](#) has shown that organisations “*with higher engagement levels have lower levels of sickness absence among staff, and also have lower spend on agency and bank staff*” and that “*NHS leaders should investigate the importance of nurturing positive, trusting cultures within which staff have high levels of well-being; where they feel valued, respected and supported*”. NHS Wales organisations have recognised this challenge and specific focus and emphasis has been placed on staff engagement and experience.

As the Parliamentary Review made clear, one of the key challenges for any organisation looking to retain its workforce is engaging effectively with employees across the organisation. Engagement doesn't sit with one person or one team - it is the responsibility of everyone.

Line managers need to be supported and given appropriate tools so that they can engage effectively with their staff. As the [Kings Fund](#) have noted, one factor is feedback where there is a clear evidential link between employees and teams who receive and ask for feedback and increased levels of engagement and performance. An all-Wales ‘*Real Time / High Quality Feedback*’ toolkit is under development and will be launched in 2018.

The Medical Engagement Scale (MES) is a survey/tool which assesses the level of engagement of the medical workforce with the goals of the organisation in which they work. Led by Medical Directors, the tool has been used within the NHS in Wales, with the aim of using the results to shape future priorities and planning in this important area of engagement. The results are being addressed at organisation level and individual action plans have been formulated to address local issues and challenges. In addition, work has been undertaken in partnership with the BMA to ensure that appropriate emphasis and attention is being given to progressing these action plans.

## Management and Leadership Framework, Public Health Wales NHS Trust

To ensure it was engaging effectively with managers, Public Health Wales NHS Trust took an approach of drawing together a Management and Leadership Framework in 2015.

The Framework explicitly states what they see as the role of managers and leaders. It is supported by a behavioural framework and a managerial activity list, covering 24 expected activities including recruitment, staff engagement and communications, business case and financial management, and engagement with trade unions.

This Framework is supported by a Management and Leadership Development Programme to ensure that managers and leaders are provided with the skills and knowledge to perform their roles.

The Trust has continued to invest in their management population through an Aspiring Managers Programme launched in 2017. In addition, managers are used as a key focal point for organisational communications, as well as action planning in areas such as embedding organisational values, workforce planning, responding to staff survey results at a local level and in delivering a “*manager led coaching culture*” as an aspiration articulated in their Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP).

As line managers are a key driver of employee satisfaction, and therefore other elements such as performance, engagement and retention, the Trust is continuing to monitor managerial and leadership results from their staff survey. They are investing further in this group by identifying them as a specific population who will have their own dedicated head of profession in 2018/19, so they can review their role and provide development as a collective on an ongoing basis.

## Building line manager capability

As the Parliamentary Review highlighted, line managers are key to staff experience in the workplace and are instrumental in supporting the wider workforce retention agenda. Line managers hold the responsibility of sharing the vision, values and activities of the team, department and organisation. To support this, line managers need appropriate support and development to ensure they are effective in getting the best out of themselves and their teams. Specific areas of support are:

- Coaching or mentoring;
- Buddying newly qualified line managers with a more experienced manager;
- Providing structured feedback;
- Formal training; and
- Signposting to resources from both within and outside the organisation.

Effective line management is also crucial in implementing health and well-being initiatives, and effective people management can have a very positive outcome on an individual's well-being.

### Generation 2015 Leadership Programme, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (UHB)

Betsi Cadwaladr UHB have been actively working to retain and up-skill their staff by supporting them to access line manager development through opportunities such as their Generation 2015 Leadership Programme.

The programme is designed to develop management and leadership competencies for Ward Managers in their day to day roles and to provide practical skills and tools to enable them to deliver effective team working so as to improve patient outcomes.

## Health and well-being

Without staff that are well and at work the NHS can't deliver quality and effective care to patients. We need to ensure that staff are provided with an environment and opportunities that encourage and enable them to lead healthy lives and make choices that support their well-being.

NHS Wales has developed a staff health and well-being charter, '[Caring for people who care](#)'. The charter highlights that it is the joint responsibility of managers and individual employees to work together to encourage healthier lifestyles and life choices, support each other in the work place, and to promote the effective management of sickness when staff cannot work through ill health or are at risk of having to take sick leave.

### The All-Wales NHS Health and Well-being Project Group

The All Wales NHS Health and Well-being Project Group was formed in July 2016 with the aim of increasing collaborative health and well-being developments and projects across NHS Wales.

One of its early initiatives aimed to improve sickness absence through effective people management skills. This was supported by a training programme for all staff managing sickness absence with a focus on people management skills and behaviours.

Two specific initiatives were launched in early 2018 which are available to all staff as interactive PDF documents. These are:

- **Our Well-being Matters** – a suite of resources and links to areas such as emotional/psychological well-being and physical health; and
- **Manager Well-being Matters** – guidance to support managers' own well-being and the well-being of others through effective delivery of their role in creating the conditions where health and well-being can be supported.

## Looking after new staff

Successful staff retention begins with efficient and robust recruitment processes and effective induction. The right staff, in terms of knowledge, skills and values need to be recruited in a timely manner. NHS Wales has been working through 2017 to significantly reduce the time it takes to recruit a new employee, from the time the post becomes vacant to the new employee starting in the role.

Values-based recruitment helps retain staff and reduce staff turnover by helping to ensure that new employees' personal values and behaviours align with those of the organisation. A number of organisations in Wales are beginning to use this approach.

Also, recruitment and retention issues are accentuated in rural communities, and approaches are being developed to support the functioning of clinical and professional networks in these areas.

## Values and behaviour framework, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (UHB)

In 2016, Cardiff and Vale UHB listened to over 3000 staff and patient views about the perfect day in health care. This led to a revised values and behaviour framework which is being integrated within all workforce processes, including recruitment.

A workshop with a range of staff groups was held to identify the characteristics of different roles, including nursing, healthcare support workers, senior managers, admin and clerical, and allied health professionals. The workshops explored how they might test the values using the specific characteristics of those roles to build questions and scenarios.

Values-based recruitment will be rolled out for all roles by March 2019, with the initial focus on nursing. The intention is to have screening questions that can be explored in later parts of the process, and scenarios and questions to use during interviews.

## Staff induction week, Hywel Dda University Health Board (UHB)

The Hywel Dda UHB staff induction process is run consistently across Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion. The welcome week is the first impression of the organisation for new employees, and as such the Health Board aims to make it relevant and memorable.

The day opens with a welcome video message from the Chief Executive. This sets the tone for the morning with a number of key messages being delivered as part of the programme. The messages include "who we are", "what we are trying to achieve" and an overview of the organisational values which also include the [NHS Wales Core Principles](#). There are messages around creating an inclusive workplace and delivering safe care which are supported by staff testimonial videos. The day concludes with employees returning to their services and receiving a local induction from their line manager.

Days 2 to 4 are dedicated to mandatory training which ensures attendees feel confident to begin work once they return to their services. They begin by receiving moving and handling training which is followed by supported e-learning for the modules of the core skills training framework. On day 5, Health Care Support Workers commence their 10-day clinical induction programme, which consists of clinical training necessary for their role.

## **A flexible approach - working and retirement**

Being as flexible as possible with employees while at the same time ensuring high quality patient care can have a very positive effect on an organisation's ability to retain its staff. NHS Wales organisations are committed to flexible working and have agreed in partnership a set of key principles that organisations should use to support staff.

To facilitate flexible working, most organisations have implemented e-rostering for certain key staff groups, such as nurses, as a way of bringing together management information on shift patterns, annual leave requests, sickness absence data and skill mix. This allows managers to plan rotas and staff to access the system to check their shift patterns and request annual leave in a timely manner.

Consideration has also been given to the development of greater consistency and application of best practice in the utilisation of e-rostering systems. The service has recently developed a set of key performance indicators which support organisations in their ability to scrutinise their data leading to improved rostering and ultimately to released efficiencies. Further approaches are being put in place such as self-rostering and use of mobile technologies to enhance staff experience and lead to greater satisfaction with rostering process.

Another approach to flexible working is flexible retirement. It provides benefits for both the organisation and the individual, with the organisation being able to retain valuable knowledge and skills while the individual eases themselves into retirement in a way that suits them.

### **Alison Lewis, Quality and Patient Safety Lead Nurse for the Mental Health and Learning Disabilities Division, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (UHB)**

"I started my career in nursing in 1976 as a general nurse then completed my Mental Health Nursing in 1985. The majority of my career has been spent as a Community Psychiatric Nurse working with adults with acute and chronic mental health conditions. In 2002 I was successful in obtaining the role as team leader, and in 2008 I was appointed to a senior nurse post, then in 2010 was successful in obtaining the first Divisional Nurse post.

"When I became eligible to retire, I made a decision to continue to work, initially for one year. Following discussions with the Nurse Director, I made the decision to access my pension and discussed options to retire and return. We both agreed that the option of retiring and returning as the Divisional Nurse would not be the best option. Further discussions took place with the General Manager and the Divisional Director around options resulting in an agreement of a job share with a colleague who was also retiring and wanted the option of returning. This option was agreed on a fixed-term basis to be reviewed after a year. At the end of the fixed term period I made an agreement with the Division to take up my current role as Quality and Patient Safety Lead.

"The benefits for me, both in terms of reduced hours and reduced responsibility, are significant. Coming back to work has been a real positive experience to help with the transition to full retirement. It has enabled me to share the wealth of knowledge and experience that I have gained over the years and to support colleagues who are in more and less senior positions to myself. My return has enabled succession planning to support and develop individuals into their roles on both a formal and informal basis. I am called upon to give technical and managerial advice but also coach aspiring Mental Health nurses in their career development".

## Managing and developing talent for the future

NHS Wales has an ambition to deliver a pipeline of talent of NHS staff at local and national levels. Talent management and succession planning is good practice in any organisation.

There is evidence to suggest that a vibrant blend of talent management and succession planning provides an important function within an organisation and has considerable impact on the ability to retain staff. The evidence also suggests that home-grown talent, when undertaken effectively, is one of the distinguishing features of world-class, top performing organisations. When investment in individuals is valued, organisations see improved outcomes, better financial results and an engaged and adaptable workforce which ensures public confidence.

Providing education and training opportunities for staff is another way of making people feel valued, supported and professionally fulfilled. Regular appraisals and one-to-one meetings between managers and staff is a key part of NHS Wales' approach to career management and is a key part of supporting staff.

In addition to the formal learning and development opportunities which organisations offer, development also includes secondments, acquisition of specialist qualifications, stretch projects, and mentoring and coaching. Talent management and succession planning to create clear career pathways for individuals can help incentivise them to remain in the organisation. In addition, there are schemes to support the widening access agenda which enables people to develop a career and acquire qualifications while being employed by their local NHS organisation. The development of the workforce in this way leads to greater retention.

### **Clinical Health Care Support Worker (CHCSW) Framework, Cwm Taf University Health Board (UHB)**

In 2014, Cwm Taf UHB began working with partners in Merthyr and Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils to support unemployed members of the local community into gainful employment.

Since the introduction of the CHCSW Framework, the Health Board has worked internally and with partners to develop a pathway by which pre-employment trainees can access paid positions on the Staff Bank. The pathway includes:

- A two week Prepare to Care Programme delivered by the local authority;
- A one-day Health Board Corporate Orientation Programme;
- The Health Board's two-week Clinical HCSW Foundation Programme;
- Two days of patient handling training; and
- Completion of a series of shadow shifts to gain practical experience as a clinical HCSW.

Successful candidates are then recruited onto the Staff Bank and offered paid shifts. Since the majority of the substantive CHCSWs are recruited from Staff Bank this provides a route through which many pre-employment trainees obtain permanent employment within the Health Board.

Once in a substantive post, opportunities exist for Clinical HCSWs to undertake vocational qualifications at levels 2, 3 and 4 as well as additional clinical training modules appropriate to their role.

For those CHCSWs showing the ambition and aptitude, there is also an opportunity to apply for the part-time Bachelor of Nursing Degree, providing a full pathway from unemployment through to Degree Qualified Nurse.



## National planning and co-ordination

NHS Wales Employers supports the strategic workforce agenda of the NHS in Wales, recognising the central role of the workforce in facilitating service change and ensuring that the NHS is a place where people want to work and an employer of choice. NHS Wales Employers supports employers with workforce policy development, practical advice and information, along with support to enable the NHS Wales Workforce and Organisational Development community to network and to share knowledge and best practice. NHS Wales Employers is hosted by and operates as a part of the Welsh NHS Confederation.

Working on behalf of NHS Wales, the Welsh Government and education providers, Workforce, Education and Development Services (WEDS) supports the NHS in the

development of a workforce with the skills and competencies to meet the demands of modern day healthcare. The role of WEDS is critical to NHS Wales in the delivery of its key strategic objectives and in the planning of the future workforce requirements both in terms of numbers and skills. WEDS also undertakes a number of strategic pieces of work on behalf of Welsh Government and the NHS and will be incorporated into the new Health Education and Improvement Wales from October 2018.

NHS Wales organisations are working closely with trade union partners to address the areas outlined in this briefing, and in particular, through the Welsh Partnership Forum which is a tripartite forum comprising representation from Welsh Government, trade unions and NHS Wales organisations.

## Conclusion

Following the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care, we now have an opportunity to build on our current work and to put forward a long-term vision for the health and social care workforce, delivering new models of seamless services closer to peoples' homes.

Retaining the valuable members of staff currently employed by NHS Wales, who have been significantly invested in, is a key element of meeting this challenge. It is through the development of a range of approaches to address and improve staff experience as outlined in this briefing that we will ensure that our workforce is supported throughout their careers to deliver high quality services for the people of Wales.

### How can the Welsh NHS Confederation help you?

Please get in touch if you want further details on any of the issues raised in this briefing. Please contact **Nesta Lloyd-Jones, Policy and Public Affairs Manager** at [Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org](mailto:Nesta.Lloyd-Jones@welshconfed.org)

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body which represents all the organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards and three NHS Trusts.

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