



Securing and retaining staff for health and social care - a partnership approach (Gateway reference: 7317)

To: Chief Executives of Local Authorities
Directors of Adult Social Care

Copies to: English Community Care Association
National Care Association
Registered Nursing Homes Association
National Care Forum
United Kingdom Home Care Association

31 October 2006

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you to introduce the attached letter, which has been sent to NHS Trust, PCT & SHA Chief Executives. The letter presents a framework for NHS organisations to manage a stable and effective workforce during a time of change. The letter also provides an opportunity for local government and social care employers to recruit transferable skills and experience.

The Government expects all NHS organisations to take collective responsibility for managing workforce change for the benefit of staff and patients. The framework, *Securing and Retaining Staff for Health and Social Care – a Partnership Approach*, provides practical advice to NHS employers so that opportunities for staff who are at risk of displacement can be maximised across the health service and with other partners.

To this end, we are seeking to encourage NHS organisations to work with local authorities and other social care employers in the independent and voluntary sector.

The skills and experience of many health staff are highly valued in the social care sector, and the Local Government Employers Organisation have committed to working in partnership with the NHS to provide opportunities for both newly qualified healthcare professionals and existing staff who are at risk.

We wish to encourage local government and other social care employers to support these measures within local workforce strategies.

David Behan
Director General – Social Care

To: All NHS Trust, PCT & SHA Chief Executives
Gateway Reference: 7306

30 October 2006

Dear Colleague,

Many NHS organisations are reviewing the way they work, redesigning services and ensuring that they use their resources efficiently and productively. Inevitably this means assessing the numbers of staff they need and how best to deploy their skills and experience. Employers and staff need to be supported through these complex and difficult changes. The NHS faces a huge challenge in responding to these demands in a way that will conserve the skills it has invested in and ensure that service reform is achieved in partnership with staff.

We are one of the biggest employers in the country and we have a collective responsibility to manage change well across the health and social care system. Enclosed with this letter is a framework for NHS organisations to manage a stable and effective workforce during a time of change and challenge. The aim is to maintain the confidence of patients, staff and service users by providing practical support and advice to employers so that the opportunities for staff who are at risk of displacement can be maximised across the service and with other partners. The framework also outlines practical support for newly qualified healthcare professionals who may be seeking their first post after training.

As a result of the Framework published today, NHS staff can expect the following:

- The NHS, together with its partners, taking collective responsibility for managing workforce change for the benefit of staff and patients
- Chief Executive, Trust Board and SHA leadership to drive strong, system wide collaboration on workforce solutions
- Close and effective partnership working with trade unions at all levels
- Maximising use of NHS Jobs to support redeployment across the service
- Collaboration with universities and colleges to support new qualifiers
- Innovative working with Jobcentre Plus
- NHS, independent sector, local government and social care employers linking to harness expertise and resources
- Helping staff gain employment where care services are shifting into communities.

NHS organisations are taking practical steps to ensure that as they plan for financial stability, reductions in staffing levels are successfully achieved through expected turnover, redeployment and by reducing demand for agency staff, to minimise the level of compulsory redundancies required. The NHS Employers framework attached showcases what can be achieved by trusts and across local health economies. It builds on the earlier briefing *Maximising employment opportunities in a changing NHS* and sets out a range of measures that can help employers reduce costs and reshape their workforce without recourse to redundancies.

The Department of Health strongly advises all NHS organisations to incorporate these measures within local workforce strategies to manage displacement. SHAs will support and encourage cross boundary partnerships that seek to maximise the opportunities available to displaced and newly qualified staff. The outcome for staff in applying this framework would be a strong reassurance that, as far as possible:

- trusts would ring-fence vacancies for at-risk staff who have the necessary qualifications, and
- anyone who is made redundant would be given an interview with a personal adviser equipped with detailed knowledge of the health sector.

To support this approach the NHS Jobs service has been enhanced to provide a redeployment facility for staff who are at risk. NHS organisations are encouraged to consider staff within the talent pool for vacant posts before resorting to wider recruitment.

Similar functionality is available within NHS Jobs to assist newly qualified healthcare professionals in securing their first job. SHAs will be able to work with local employers and HEIs to identify local opportunities. Some may wish to support more advance matching and placement facilities, working in partnership with their local education providers, NHS trusts, independent sector providers and employers in social care. NHS Employers is able to support these arrangements and provide guidance on their use. Leaders from the independent sector employers forum and the local government employers organisation (LGE) have committed to working in partnership with the NHS to provide opportunities for both newly qualified healthcare professionals and existing staff who are at risk

There are a range of partners to assist the NHS manage workforce reductions in a way that will support staff and help those who cannot be redeployed across the NHS find new careers. Jobcentre Plus, Learning and Skills Councils, the Regional Development Agencies are all prepared to work both nationally and locally to support NHS employers and their staff and it is vital we continue to work in partnership with the trade unions and professional bodies. SHAs have a critical role in facilitating partnership working across regional and local health and social care communities.

Finally, it is important to recognise that the NHS has benefitted in recent years from significant recruitment of international healthcare professionals. Without their contribution, the recent expansion in services would not have been possible and their commitment to improving patient services continues to be highly valued. It is sensible to review the ongoing role for international recruitment in the NHS. The Department has worked with the Home Office to introduce new arrangements to manage healthcare migration that recognise that the NHS is now far more self-sufficient through increased domestic workforce supply. Employers should review their arrangements for international recruitment and test the resident labour market before looking to recruit internationally.

We commend this Framework to you but effective delivery will require your concerted efforts on the ground. The NHS relies upon the skills, commitment and dedication of the people it trains and employs. This rich resource needs to be sustained. We appreciate that this is a very difficult and challenging time for the staff concerned and we need to ensure every route is taken to support staff and do more to help them understand how the NHS is changing. This framework from NHS Employers will provide additional support to the service in meeting these challenges.

David Nicholson
NHS Chief Executive

Steve Barnett
NHS Employers Chief Executive