

Case Study

All Wales International Recruitment Programme



NWSSP commissioned to deliver the All Wales International Recruitment Programme.

Background

There is an increased level of demand for nursing care across Wales due to a number of factors including recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for additional surge capacity in both emergency and planned care and the implementation of the Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Act 2016; as well as increased levels of attrition attributable to the demographic profile of the current nursing workforce and a high level of vacancies across NHS organisations in Wales.

It is widely recognised that this increased level of demand cannot be met entirely by the domestic supply of Registered Nurses into the workforce in the short to medium term.



What happened?

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP) were commissioned to deliver an All-Wales International Recruitment programme, which was implemented at an unprecedented pace.

Following consultation with local nursing and workforce leads, Health Boards agreed on the number of Registered Nurses (RNs) they were committed to recruiting during Phase 1 of the Programme equating to an All-Wales total of 422 across six participant Health Boards.

Six working groups were established to lead on specific workstreams within the programme, with the organisational representation provided by nursing, finance and workforce leads across Wales. These groups were tasked with scoping best practice and agreeing to an All Wales approach to each of the relevant workstreams, utilising the International Recruitment Toolkit developed by NHS Employers.

Following the agreement of All Wales selection criteria, a total of 73 interview panels and 685 interviews were set up and held between January and March 2022, with selection panels undertaken on an All-Wales basis. At the conclusion of the selection process, a total of 413 offers were made to international nurses representing an achievement of 97% against the target of appointing 422 nurses by 31 March 2022.

What benefits were realised?

- ✓ The delivery of over 400 Registered Nurses into the NHS Wales workforce, through a high-volume mass-recruitment exercise co-ordinated at a national level, which would not have been achievable within the designated timescale if reliant on the internal resources and capacity of each organisation individually.
- ✓ The reduced costs for NHS Wales organisations were £84k¹ in supplier fees through a collaborative procurement exercise using economies of scale, including negotiation and agreement of consistent fees to every supplier under contract.
- ✓ There was an agreement on an All Wales Selection and Shortlisting criteria, ensuring a consistent approach to maintaining professional standards in the calibre of candidate appointments.
- ✓ Adoption of a Once for Wales marketing approach to targeted overseas recruitment in close alignment with the Train, Work, Live campaign, and promotion of a strong NHS Wales “brand” internationally.
- ✓ Agreement of an All Wales relocation package, reducing internal competition between organisations and ensuring a consistent welcome for international recruits.



¹Excluding other hidden savings, administration overheads associated with separate campaigns in each organisation, or the efficiency savings from a centrally administered interview and selection process.

- ✓ Phase 1 significantly reduced the administration burden associated with shortlisting and interviewing almost 700 nurses in eight weeks, it reduced the pressure on independent procurement & clinical nurse lead teams to award several contracts to a number of suppliers who are often the same suppliers across NHS Wales. But most importantly it had an agreed objective to 'recruit for Wales', which reduced any risk of internal competition between organisations. A significant amount of work was done to assist the potential recruits to select their preferred organisation in advance, which when coupled with an independent distribution of successful candidates ensured that all Health Boards met their requirements irrespective of the organisations' locality.

Key learning?

There remain considerable challenges in respect of the supply of suitable accommodation for international arrivals and limited access to centres offering the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) and training, which reflects the increased international recruitment activity across the UK.

There is also recognition that robust pastoral care by the host Health Board is essential to the longer-term retention of international recruits.

Future/Next steps

Conversations are ongoing with Welsh Government, suppliers and Health Board partners in scoping organisational requirements for further phases of International Recruitment, closely aligned to their nursing workforce plans and the modelling work being undertaken as part of the new Nursing Workforce Plan for Wales.

NWSSP is also working closely with Welsh Government and Health Boards to explore innovative delivery models for additional International Recruitment to deliver further cost savings for NHS Wales.

