

# NHS recovery to put staff wellbeing at its heart

- NHS People Plan to address new pandemic challenges and improve physical and mental health support for staff
- Health Secretary calls on health and social care staff to share where rules and regulations could be amended in bureaucracy-busting push
- Recruitment drive will capitalise on renewed interest in jobs in health, as NHS careers website sees 138% increase in interest in nursing

The [NHS People Plan](#) published today puts NHS staff wellbeing at its heart with a new recruitment, retention and support package. It sets out practical support for wellbeing such as safe spaces to rest and recuperate, wellbeing guardians and support to keep staff physically safe and healthy.

The People Plan builds on the innovations driven by staff during the pandemic and sets out how the NHS can embed them.

This includes:

- the rapid assembly of research nurses and clinical trial assistants to recruit patients for the world's biggest randomised clinical trial
- the surge in volunteers to support those in need
- a new emphasis on flexible working with remote meetings and consultations becoming widespread

The People Plan and a new bureaucracy-busting call for evidence will work together to find and promote positive changes made before and during the pandemic. This could include allowing staff to use secure messaging services like WhatsApp so patients can benefit from rapid access to information and making it easier to link millions of primary care records to the latest data on coronavirus, helping government do the world's largest analysis of coronavirus risk factors.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Every single person working in the NHS has contributed to an unprecedented national effort to beat back this virus and save lives. They have protected us and in return this government will do everything in its power to protect and support them.

By making the NHS the best place to work we'll recruit and retain more talent and deliver 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors in general practice and 26,000 staff primary care professionals.

Our NHS people deserve to get on with caring for patients and this crisis has proved there's bureaucracy that our healthcare system can do better without. So I'm urging people across the NHS and social care to speak up about what red tape you can do without to

allow you to better deliver the high-quality care you are renowned for.

Key actions from the NHS People Plan include:

- from January 2021, all job roles across NHS England and NHS Improvement will be advertised as being available for flexible working patterns
- all NHS organisations will complete risk assessments for vulnerable staff, including black and ethnic minority colleagues, and take action where needed
- encouraging former staff to return to practice as part of a recruitment drive during 2020 to 2021, building on the interest of clinical staff who returned to the frontline to support during the pandemic. A recent survey of returners revealed around half were interested in continuing to work in the health and social care system
- boosting the mental health and cancer workforce, including by offering training grants for 350 nurses to become cancer or chemotherapy specialists
- working with universities to increase over 5,000 undergraduate places from September 2020 in nursing, midwifery, allied health professions and dental therapy and hygienist courses
- a new £10 million fund for clinical placements for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to support employers in educating and training the next generation of professionals
- every NHS trust, foundation trust and clinical commissioning group (CCG) must publish progress to ensure that at every level the workforce is representative of the overall black and ethnic minority workforce
- the NHS will launch a new quarterly staff survey to better track morale on top of the current annual survey

The pandemic also highlighted areas where unnecessary bureaucracy can be cut, while still ensuring safe, high standards of care. Health and care staff will be invited to share their insights and experiences of overly burdensome bureaucracy in the health and social care system as part of a call for evidence.

Prerana Issar, NHS chief people officer, said:

This plan aims to make real and lasting change in our NHS to benefit our hardworking staff. It includes practical actions based on what our people tell us matters to them, including a more equal, inclusive and flexible organisation.

The pandemic has created huge challenges, but it has also highlighted the courage and innovation we are capable of in the most difficult of times. We have recognised the need for consistently high-quality health and wellbeing support for our staff, so they can better care for themselves and their patients. These changes must remain part of the blueprint of our NHS as we move forward together.

During the COVID-19 period professional regulators such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council and General Medical Council have introduced virtual hearings which saves both those being investigated and giving-evidence time. They have also taken a different approach to revalidation which provides more time to supporting patients. Developments like these should be maintained and built upon.

Local systems are being asked to develop their own People Plans alongside social care and public health partners, to ensure that local strategies for recovery and to step services back up have a strong focus on the organisations people.

A further People Plan will follow, once the forthcoming spending review has confirmed future NHS education and training budgets. The government will shortly publish its Social Care Winter Plan, building on NHS support for the sector during COVID-19, to ensure the system has the support it needs in preparation for winter and potential future outbreaks.

The Prime Minister recently announced a further £3 billion winter funding for the NHS to relieve winter pressures on A&E and provide additional capacity for the NHS to carry out routine treatments and procedures. This is on the top of a record cash funding boost worth £33.9 billion extra by 2023 to 2024.

## **Case study: Milton Keynes University Hospital**

Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) has developed a unique staff benefits programme for its 4,500-strong workforce. In early 2019, the hospital's executive team asked staff to come up with ideas to improve their working lives – however big or small, however unusual.

The first phase of benefits, which was introduced in May 2019, included:

- enhanced staff health and wellbeing services, particularly around stress and musculo-skeletal conditions
- enhanced bereavement leave, special leave and flexible working
- local gym memberships

The hospital committed to a 3-year programme of benefits for staff, with the next phase including lease cars and looking at childcare provision. Following the implementation of this, MKUH has seen improved retention rates.

## **Background information**

The [NHS People Plan is published on NHS England website](#).

The NHS People Plan aims to make real and lasting change, setting out the focused action that NHS people have said they need, right now and for the next 6 months. It includes specific commitments to:

- look after NHS people, including greater support for health and wellbeing, building on existing support including a dedicated health and care staff support line, specialist bereavement support and free access

to mental health and wellbeing apps. Actions include:

- piloting an approach to improving staff mental health by establishing resilience hubs working in partnership with occupational health programmes to undertake proactive outreach and assessment, and coordinate referrals to appropriate treatment and support for a range of needs to ensure that staff are supported to stay well and in work
- from January 2021, all job roles across NHS England and NHS Improvement will be advertised as being available for flexible working patterns
- all NHS organisations will complete risk assessments for vulnerable staff, including black and ethnic minority colleagues and anyone who needs additional support, and take action where needed
- future-proof the NHS by ensuring a pipeline of talent, capitalising on recent interest in healthcare jobs as the NHS careers website has seen an unprecedented number of hits, with the number of people looking for information on nursing rising by 138% between March and June. This has already translated into more UK-based applicants for healthcare courses than ever before, and the latest figures also show there are over 13,500 more nurses working in the NHS compared to last year. Actions include:
  - a new international marketing campaign through 2020 to 2021, to promote the NHS as an employer of choice for international health workers, alongside work to ensure ethical recruitment
  - encouraging former staff to return to practice as part of a recruitment drive during 2020 to 2021, building on the interest of clinical staff who returned to the frontline to support during the pandemic, after a recent survey of returners revealed around half were interested in continuing to work in the health and social care system
  - boosting the mental health and cancer workforce including by offering training grants for 350 nurses to become cancer or chemotherapy specialists
- work with universities to support an increase of over 5,000 undergraduate places from September 2020 in nursing, midwifery, allied health professions and dental therapy and hygienist courses
- a new £10 million fund for clinical placements for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to support employers in educating and training the next generation of professionals
- encourage and scale up new ways of working and delivering care:
  - a new National Learning Hub for Volunteering has been launched to support the learning, training and development of volunteers across health, social care and the third sector and employers should develop plans to support volunteers who wish to gain jobs in the NHS
  - every NHS trust, foundation trust and CCG must publish progress to ensure that at every level the workforce is representative of the overall black and ethnic minority workforce
  - the NHS will launch a new quarterly staff survey to better track morale on top of the current annual survey