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## NORTHERN DEVON HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST REWARD AS PART OF AN EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

### ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

- Provides acute services from North Devon District Hospital and community care across northern Devon.
- Employs more than 3,400 staff, with a third of the workforce based in a community setting.

### SUMMARY

Recruitment and retention of staff is one of the biggest challenges faced by NHS employers nationally. Darryn Allcorn, director of nursing, quality and workforce at Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust (NDHCT) shares how using reward, within a clear recruitment strategy, has helped to ease the workforce supply pressures facing his organisation and has resulted in a reduction in the trust's vacancy rates.

### THE CHALLENGE

NDHCT's recruitment and retention strategy sets many challenging aims and objectives for the trust. This includes a commitment to reducing vacancy rates across all areas and particularly within certain shortage occupation groups. The key strategic objective behind this is to increase substantive staff numbers to improve the stability and continuity of services and control agency spend.

The trust needs to continue to recruit a highly-skilled and dedicated workforce, which is aligned to the trust's values and committed to the aims of the organisation. By managing talent effectively, the trust hopes to create a resilient workforce, with the right mix of skills and expertise to respond quickly to changes.

NDHCT is situated in a rural, coastal location, around an hour and a half's drive from the nearest university and roughly 50 miles from the next nearest acute hospital. Poor transport links to the hospital makes it very difficult to recruit from other towns and cities. It is very important for NDHCT to promote its local reward offer to be considered an employer of choice and attract talent from the local area and those who are willing to relocate.

### WHAT THEY'VE DONE

#### Recommend a friend scheme

In January 2017, the trust introduced a successful recommend a friend scheme to attract and retain staff from shortage occupation groups including physiotherapists, occupational

therapists and registered nurses. Existing staff may receive a £1,000 recommend a friend payment if they introduce an applicant for a vacant post. The applicant must give the name of the employee who recommended the trust to them and the payment is made after the new employee has been in post for three months. Currently this is seeing an increase in recruitment for hard to recruit roles by five per cent.

### **Welcome to North Devon video**

The trust's recruitment video was developed to show that North Devon offers great career opportunities and is a fantastic place to live. The suggestion to create the video came from a group of clinical staff who wanted to show prospective applicants all the things that had attracted them to NDHCT. The video opens with panoramic views of the coastline and stunning scenery of the local area. Members of staff are filmed in the workplace talking about the variety of challenging careers available at NDHCT, the cutting-edge research and great opportunities for career progression. When they finish work, the same staff are seen surfing, walking and enjoying the outdoor lifestyle with their friends and families.

### **An individual approach to NHS Jobs**

NDHCT promotes its local reward initiatives in its adverts on NHS Jobs. All adverts include an A-Z of benefits which brings together all the rewards available to staff in one place. Links to information about the local area and the dedicated recruitment website are also included to set the adverts apart from others. Advertising the vacancies on social media has been highly effective in increasing awareness of new opportunities within targeted networks.

### **Support on relocation**

The trust identifies any relocation needs early in the interview process and builds relocation packages accordingly. The trust can offer onsite accommodation, often as a short-term measure while new staff get to know the area and make longer-term living arrangements. Financial support is provided occasionally and the trust also works with staff to help their families find jobs in the local area too.

### **Continuously review pay and non-pay benefits**

The trust reviews its reward offer annually to make sure staff benefits are in line with what employees want. The most recent review considered its approach to salary sacrifice schemes, following changes surrounding tax rules, and focused on including more health and wellbeing initiatives as part of the reward offer. Feedback is sought from staff who have used the various rewards as well as those who haven't, to ensure the offer meets employee needs.

### **Recognising achievements**

The trust recognises outstanding contribution, long service and teamwork through an awards scheme. Monthly awards are issued to recognise the values of the organisation and to celebrate these achievements. Staff can nominate colleagues to receive a hamper which is presented to the winner by a non-executive director. The scheme forms part of the induction programme and values based recruitment.

### **Dedicated recruitment website**

The homepage of the trust's dedicated recruitment website opens with the Welcome to North Devon video. The 'Why work for us?' section provides potential applicants with

information about the trust and comprehensive details of the trust's reward offer. The information focuses on many of the intangible and less obvious staff benefits, such as the flexible and innovative working environment, opportunities for learning and development and how the trust supports staff health and wellbeing. Applicants can hear testimonials from existing staff explaining in their own words why they love working for the trust. The website has all the details of upcoming recruitment events and current vacancies and more detailed information about its refer a friend scheme. The website has had significant impact in increasing applications in some roles up to 50 per cent.

## OUTCOMES

Over the last 18 months, the trust has seen some great progress against its recruitment aims and objectives:

- Nursing vacancies have fallen from 10 per cent to six per cent and continue to decline and were at four per cent in September 2017.
- Applicant numbers have risen significantly by over 400 per cent.
- Turnover has fallen by two per cent. This is a great achievement given the age profile of the workforce, with more than one third of staff aged over 55, around 60 per cent of leavers are due to retirement.
- Clear lines of promotion and career progression are helping improve talent management and succession planning. The trust has seen 100 support workers train to become assistant practitioners and five of those have now gone on to become nurses.
- There is a continued and significant reduction in non-medical agency usage.

New recruits have given very positive feedback about their experiences and have found the working environment at NDHCT is very much in line with how it was described during the recruitment process.

## NEXT STEPS

- The trust will continue to develop its recognition strategy, with a focus on ensuring staff feel valued and improving job satisfaction. The trust plans to introduce an annual award ceremony and an online staff recognition platform.
- A new A-Z of benefits document is being created to launch several new health and wellbeing initiatives into the reward offer.

## TOP TIPS

- **Clearly communicate your reward offer** - bring all the information together in one place and make it easy to find.
- **Promote your unique selling points** - play to your strengths and shout about why your trust is a great place to work
- **Listen to your staff** - find out what they value and what is important to them.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more details please contact Darryn Alcorn, director of nursing, quality and workforce [darryn.allcorn@nhs.net](mailto:darryn.allcorn@nhs.net) .

Find out more about reward in the NHS through our [reward web pages](#) and view further case studies and tools in our [reward resource library](#). You can contact the reward team on 0113 306 3000 or by emailing us at [reward@nhsemployers.org](mailto:reward@nhsemployers.org).

For advice and support on effective recruitment, please visit our [recruitment web pages](#).