

Off-framework checklist

Quick and easy tips to reduce off-framework bookings in your NHS organisation

1. Establish a central booking process

A central booking process for all agency supply improves oversight and governance, and maintains expectations with the agency sector. Direct bookings by individual wards/departments should be avoided.

2. Agree an approval process

Establish a clear process, including Executive approval, of all off-framework bookings and ensure widespread awareness of the process across the trust.

3. Plan for gaps

Calculate the typical need for off-framework supply and consistently update your recruitment teams to enable them to plot the demand with rolling job adverts.

4. Give priority to bank workers

Allow shifts booked by agencies to remain live to bank workers. Ensure appropriate agency cancellation time periods are used as per your approved framework agreement to mitigate the risk of paying a late cancellation fee.

5. Record agency worker names

Recording agency worker names reduces the risk of agencies reintroducing workers, that are already known to the trust, at a higher pay rate or through an off-framework agency. This also helps to minimise the risk of the trust becoming liable for any transfer fees.

6. Create a preferred supplier list / tiering system

Managing on-framework agencies through a preferred supplier list or equivalent agency model helps to identify suppliers with the capability to meet specific requirements, and improves management of the performance of suppliers against KPIs agreed in their call-off contracts.

7. Remove off-framework agencies from supplier lists

Avoid including any off-framework agencies in preferred supplier lists / agency supply chains. Include an escalation process within preferred supplier lists, which is tiered by lead time and charge rate.

8. Review preferred supplier list / agency contracts

Review preferred supplier list / agency contracts at least every fiscal quarter to monitor performance (i.e. high fill rate and price cap compliance) and remove agencies with poor performance.

9. Consider block bookings

Consider block bookings (within NHSE capped rates) via on-framework agencies. This supports workforce planning and continuity of patient care, whilst enabling trusts to negotiate better value for money.

10. Collaborate with other trusts and systems

Working together at a system level helps remove off-framework usage in a more strategic and sustainable way, and prevents off-framework agencies moving between neighbouring trusts. For complete transparency, implement a system-wide data sharing agreement.

11. Access support from your NHS Workforce Alliance regional partner

Expert and dedicated NHS procurement support is available to help implement and manage preferred supplier lists, and investigate poor agency performance. Contact us via our website for more information.