



Workforce Alliance



Our service

Bringing together
people who care

workforcealliance.nhs.uk

1. Who we are

The NHS Workforce Alliance is a partnership between the four NHS owned collaborative procurement hubs and the largest public sector buying organisation in the UK. We are:

NHS North of England Commercial Procurement Collaborative
NHS East of England Collaborative Procurement Hub
NHS Commercial Solutions
NHS London Procurement Partnership
Crown Commercial Service

All five partners have decades of experience in providing a wide range of commercial services and operational support to the NHS. We started building our Alliance in 2018, and formalised our partnership agreement in 2020.

Our Alliance delivers services in all aspects of NHS workforce management, including permanent recruitment, clinical and non-clinical agency staff, staff bank, international recruitment, insourcing services and a range of initiatives supporting staff retention and well-being. We offer a comprehensive service that provides commercial support to all aspects of NHS workforce strategy.

We are entirely public sector owned. We are part of the NHS. We are self-funded and any surplus generated by our Alliance is reinvested in our service to the NHS.

We also work at a senior level with NHS policy departments, including NHS England, and with trade associations. Our leverage enables us to act as a voice for the NHS, ensuring that the key issues and challenges raised by our service users in the NHS can be heard.



2. Why we work together



We built our partnership to benefit the NHS by:



Combining our strengths in operating at national scale while providing flexible, dedicated service delivery to the NHS at local and regional level.



Reducing confusion and complexity in the market by working to a common strategy, procuring once, and focusing on improving the quality and value delivered to the NHS by our approved suppliers.



Responding to changes in the structure of the NHS – including the development of Integrated Care Systems and Integrated Care Boards – to enable effective collaboration across NHS trust boundaries.



Supporting NHS England in its policy aims for workforce and for improved commercial outcomes, in line with the scale of combined NHS buying power.

3. Our service

Our service is driven by our market expertise, our knowledge of supply markets and of the typical workforce challenges faced by the NHS.

By working closely with both the supply market and NHS policy teams, we develop new and innovative workforce solutions to emerging challenges, which we can help you deploy locally and quickly. Whether these are focused on service improvement, transformation or workforce utilisation we are proud of our ability to be responsive, and our national scope means that we can quickly identify and share insights and good practice across our NHS networks. Our advice is based on data and evidence, and we can support your implementation.



We are a not-for-profit organisation.

Please find below a brief description of our seven key service lines. All are available to you and you can use them in whichever combination you like – from just one standalone service, to the full range.

You can also “self-serve” by accessing our framework agreements on our website: workforcealliance.nhs.uk. Our suppliers are quality assured and have signed-up to terms and conditions protecting patient safety and ensuring value for money.

Our website also includes more information on each of our service lines and how to access them.

1. Consultation – advice and solutions

While the NHS faces some shared workforce challenges, we recognise that specific needs and priorities differ by NHS trust and region. Whether your trust is working on an independent initiative or partnering with colleagues through an ICB or an alternative regional collaboration, we are available to offer advice and support on:

- Building your workforce plan
 - Achieving optimal balance across permanent, fixed-term, bank and agency staff – bringing down costs, and improving staffing levels
 - Bringing innovation to fix long-term problems – such as using data insights and analytics to optimise rostering
 - Developing or renewing procurement agreements with the supply market
 - Offering insight and assistance into specific problems, from local supply constraints to the application of national policy to local practice, from quality concerns to rate-card compliance
 - Working effectively across NHS trust boundaries to implement a system-wide workforce strategy
 - Supporting project management – from design to implementation.
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2. Managing agency supply

Agency markets are often under intense scrutiny in the NHS, attracting both media and political attention, which can create significant operational and financial pressure. Not all challenges have quick or easy solutions, and some require changes at both the NHS trust and the supplier base, but we can work with you to:

- Develop an approved list of suppliers for your trust, including technical supply chain solutions such as master or neutral vendor provider agreements (MVPs and NVPs) where a lead supplier coordinates supply from other agency providers, giving you a single point of contact
- Ensure that your selected suppliers consistently meet local and national quality requirements
- Streamline and digitise your recruitment processes to free up staff time
- Help you to manage your demand for agency workers by identifying root causes, department by department, across your hospital
- Support workforce leads with e-rostering and job planning activities, to develop agency forecasting and provide strategic oversight to temporary staffing strategies.
- Protect you against patient safety risks by having processes and procedures in place to confirm **all** agency staff are supplied through an approved provider.

3. Supplier relationship management

Working effectively and collaboratively with suppliers is fundamental to the success of any service delivery that depends on their participation. We have extensive market knowledge and contacts with our supplier base – which ranges from large, multi-divisional companies, to SMEs and specialists. Our relationships and knowledge can help you:

- Select the suppliers with a proven track record in your area
- Work with you to develop the growth of small, local and specialist suppliers
- Support you in developing and monitoring service level agreements with your supplier base, including issue resolution.





4. Data and insights

We collect a vast quantity of data each month from suppliers and – on a voluntary basis – from NHS trusts. This enables us to identify key trends at a local, regional, and national level on everything from fill-rate to demand patterns which means our advice to you is underpinned by evidence.

- Using our access to data, we can customise reports for you to help develop a strategy (e.g. use of agency staff by department) and to monitor effective implementation (e.g. performance reports, trend analysis)
- We can show how you compare with your peer group and with national trends
- We can help you to identify and achieve realistic targets and outcomes.

5. Operational procurement support

Our partnership brings together unrivalled procurement expertise on a national scale, enabling us to support you with:

- All procurement queries, from a compliance enquiry to a major new initiative
- Developing new supply agreements through our “assisted call-off” service, whereby we help you use our frameworks in a way that meets your local needs
- Support to develop effective specifications to drive efficiency and digitisation of services to save NHS staff time and reduce time to hire
- Building plans and strategies to ensure that all suppliers supporting your workforce needs are working in a coordinated way.

6. Contract management

Once a contract is in place, it’s important to monitor it to ensure it is being delivered as agreed and continues to meet your needs in a changing environment. We can help you by:

- Developing KPIs and a reporting dashboard (e.g. fill-rates, cost management, effective sub-contracting)
- Assisting with dispute resolution, including senior management escalation when required
- Technical advice and support on complex supply chains, such as international recruitment.



7. Staff bank

An internal staff bank is a vital resource for the NHS. Some trusts operate an “in-house” model operating the service internally, while others prefer to use specialist suppliers that can bring experience and potentially access to a wider worker base through an “outsourced” model. Both options can be effective depending on circumstance, and NHS trusts will sometimes change their strategy in response to local needs. We can:

- Help you identify the best solutions for your particular bank staff needs, based on data and evidence
 - Project manage the implementation of an outsourced bank service
 - Provide advice on all aspects of staff bank management, including options for shared banks.
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4. How our services can help you

We are here to help the NHS achieve its key HR performance objectives, as documented in *The Future of NHS Human Resources and Organisational Development: 22 November 2021. NHS England – The future of NHS human resources and organisation development report*

In particular, our services can help support:

- System level collaboration (Objective 9)
- Data insights and reporting (Objective 10)
- Working jointly with NHS England's regional teams (Objective 32)
- Workforce planning, including digital tools and resources (Objective 33)
- Using benefits of scale to address local supply issues (Objective 35)

We do this by a mix of remote and onsite working. Our standard service is free and there is no charge to access our procurements. For specific long-term projects that require dedicated resourcing support we will work with you to develop an equitable funding model.

We are not-for-profit but we must work within our cost envelope, so we may need to make a charge for providing dedicated resources on large-scale, complex projects.



5. Commercial agreements

We have established a complete portfolio of commercial agreements with suppliers across all aspects of workforce – shown here:



All of our agreements deliver:

- Patient safety requirements as specified by NHS Employers
 - Compliance with NHS England's national workforce policies
 - Value for money.
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6. Get involved

As a national partnership with customers from across the UK, the NHS Workforce Alliance is ideally positioned to bring people together to discuss challenges and share best practice and learnings. We understand the workforce challenges which colleagues are facing right now and throughout the year we run forums and webinars on topical themes which aim to support you in your job.

If you're interested in knowing more about these, please reach out to your NHS Workforce Alliance partner or scan the QR code below to visit the Contact NHS Workforce Alliance page on our website.



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