

Recruiting staff from overseas – pastoral care

What sort of support and pastoral care are we expected to offer new recruits who have come to the UK from abroad and have not worked in this country before?

It can be a life-changing time for people from overseas trying to settle into a new life and a new job in the UK and, as an employer, you may even experience challenges in integrating these recruits into their roles if you fail to be empathetic and understanding of their journeys.

It's important to provide strong resettlement support and additional pastoral care pre- and post-employment for overseas recruits, including refugees and displaced people settled in the UK with the right to work; so your organisation should consider having a plan for induction, pastoral and professional support to help them to adjust to our cultural and working differences, and thrive in the UK.

NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are working to establish a clear pastoral offer in the NHS's international recruitment model so that the experience of recruits coming to work in healthcare in the UK is improved and standardised. Recognising that these principles also apply in social care, the National Care Forum (NCF) produced an example of a pastoral checklist specific to recruiting overseas staff in social care, and it covers pre-employment, induction and beyond.

In terms of pre-employment, considerations may include arranging new recruits' uniforms, helping with accommodation issues, discussing any concerns they may have about getting to work, including advice about local transport, registering with a GP, and getting ready for the first day. Even a tour of the local town can be very helpful.

"Warm up" days can be used to introduce your new recruits to the management, meet the care team and get familiar with the workplace; a greeting lunch or welcome dinner could be part of this event. The day should serve to provide information about what to expect during their induction, and for connecting recruits with existing staff networks, such as setting up a WhatsApp group. Some employers may even consider a salary advance for new recruits with difficulties accessing funds.



You may look at employing a full-time member of staff to lead on pastoral care, and they may require training in topics such as immigration, cultural awareness and modern slavery, as well as develop knowledge of maternity and family support schemes available. The experiences of any previously internationally recruited staff should also help to inform your approach.

During induction to your organisation, a welcome pack should contain job information as well as local information, and you will need to explain the values and culture of your organisation as well as cover learning about social care generally in the UK. Discussion about support available in terms of professional-specific training and education, and future ongoing professional development and career planning, is also vital to ensure that you make your recruits feel valued when they come to work for you in the UK, and this will help with retention and signal to staff that they can progress within your organisation.

It's also important as part of their social induction to set up buddying and peer support, as well as other specific ways to help them to connect with the local community.

NCF recommends exploring a trauma-informed approach to help support staff wellbeing.

The NHSEI and DHSC have produced resources to support those delivering international recruitment in the NHS, including a pastoral care checklist, organisational readiness assessment and cultural awareness guide for line managers, which may also be useful. NHS Employers' International Recruitment Toolkit even includes recommendations for a voluntary Pastoral Care Quality Award Scheme, encouraging the health service to "raise the bar in on-boarding, pastoral care and health and wellbeing" for internationally recruited nurses.

For further information, see our topic on [Agency Workers in Social Care](#).

