

Publications approval reference: 001559

To:
Directors of Nursing, NHS provider
organisations
Regional Chief Nurses, NHS England and
NHS Improvement

NHS England and NHS Improvement
Skipton House
80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

CC:
HR Directors, NHS provider organisations

25 September 2020

Dear Colleague,

We wrote to you 10 September 2020 to outline the [current position and plans for nursing and midwifery workforce capacity as we move into the third phase of the NHS response](#). This letter today summarises the extensive package of measures to support you with your nursing international recruitment (IR) with details on how you can apply for funding.

The NHS benefits significantly from the thousands of committed staff who arrive each year from overseas countries to work in the NHS. Clearly, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on IR in the past few months. We are now however beginning to see a lifting of some of the international travel restrictions and some international nurses have travelled to the UK to join the NHS in the past few weeks.

As outlined in the nursing workforce phase three letter, this is an opportunity to accelerate the recruitment and arrival of international nurses and ensure that we can safely support their induction and onboarding. The sections below outline financial and non-financial support to enable you to do this.

Financial support offer

The significant funding outlined below in three strands is now available to trusts to support you in your nursing IR:

- **Strand A:** Accelerate the arrival of international nurses you have *already* appointed but are waiting to come to the UK. It will help to cover additional costs you may incur, to safely support the arrival and onboarding of your appointed international nurses. This funding is designed to enable these nurses to be inducted into your organisations and OSCE trained before the peak of winter. Our intention is that c.£1,500 per nurse is available.

- **Strand B:** Expand future nursing international recruitment. This money is aimed at starting or expanding international recruitment programmes. It will ensure we can safely and sustainably recruit and onboard international nurses in an ethical manner. It is hoped it will play an important role in reducing nursing vacancies in your region in the next few years. Our intention is that £25,000-£100,000 is available per trust in 2020/21, depending on the scale of your IR ambition and the size of your organisation.
- **Strand C:** Support to overseas trained nurses working in the NHS in non-registered nursing roles to pass their OET or IELTS English Language (EL) assessments through funding exams and providing financial support for EL educational programmes. This will provide direct support to internationally educated nurses to progress their Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) applications.

The process for applying for funding will follow a similar process to the Clinical Placements Programme. The funding will be awarded to directors of nursing so that there is direct oversight of the use of the funds to focus on effective management and a positive experience for your new international nurses.

We request that you provide a detailed plan in the supporting templates on how you will increase capacity to interview and process applications, and to expedite and increase your intake of internationally recruited nurses, including providing gold standard pastoral care and high quality OSCE training. We will require executive support within your organisation.

Details of how to apply for funding are set out in the annex to this letter and we look forward to receiving your expressions of interest.

Wider support

Our wider offer on nursing IR includes:

- induction, pastoral and professional best practice and implementation support, including masterclasses to showcase innovative approaches to IR and an online community of IR leads in trusts so we can share ideas
- boosting our NHS England and NHS Improvement and Health Education England (HEE) regional teams to help provide this hands-on support and exchange of best practice
- in a similar approach to our Retention Programme over the past few years, working directly with cohorts of trusts to support you in developing or expanding effective lead recruiter plans
- working with the organisation that developed the 'We are the NHS' campaign to design IR marketing materials for you to use in your own recruitment activities. These resources will be developed in Q3/Q4 2020/21 and will help

you advertise the NHS and your trust as the destination of choice for overseas nurses

- working with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and other government departments to create new government-to-government agreements that may facilitate recruitment from a broader range of countries. We will also commission recruitment agencies to support this, in line with ethical recruitment practice
- piloting English Language (EL) programmes with both the British Council (IELTS) and OET (OET test) to boost OSCE-ready candidates in key target countries (led by HEE)
- working closely with the NMC to ensure ongoing OSCE capacity.

We hope this offer will support a sustainable and ethical expansion of your IR activity that puts nurses at the centre of the process and has a positive impact on reducing nursing vacancies across the system.

Next steps

- The annexes set out the process for applying for financial support on IR. You will find templates attached to submit the supporting evidence required.
 - Please provide your expression of interest and completed template for **Strand A** by 5pm 9 October 2020. Please send to NHSI.Workforce@nhs.net.
 - Please provide your expression of interest and completed template for **Strand B** by 5pm 23 October 2020. Please send to NHSI.Workforce@nhs.net.
 - Please provide your completed template for **Strand C** by 5pm 9 October 2020. Please send to UKIEN.English.language@hee.nhs.uk
 - Please be aware these are hard deadlines – if we do not receive a response by these dates, you will not be considered for this programme.
 - We will aim to provide the outcome of your expression of interest within 2-4 weeks of the submission dates.
- To support this offer on IR, we ask you review and expand where possible your IR recruitment activity, and ensure you have an effective plan to safely support the arrival, induction and training of the international nurses you have already appointed in the coming weeks and months.
- We have recently added an additional tab on nursing IR in the Monthly Provider Workforce Data Collection (submitted via the Provider Financial Monitoring System (PFMS)). Please ensure your trust submits data on this each month so we can monitor international supply information to mitigate any NMC/UK Visa and Immigration bottlenecks in the system. For more information contact NHSI.workforce@nhs.net or see [here](#).

This offer of support reflects our ongoing commitment to our international nurses, and the ambitions of the recently published NHS People Plan for 2021/22.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact:
NHSI.Workforce@nhs.net.

Finally, we would like to thank you and your teams for all of your incredible work over recent times.

Best wishes,



Ruth May

Chief Nursing Officer for England
NHS England and NHS Improvement



Duncan Burton

Chief Nurse – South East Region / Director of International Nurse Recruitment
NHS England and NHS Improvement

Annex: Financial support offer to trusts

Expediting current supply (Strand A)

- From our recent survey of trusts, we understand there is a significant number of appointed nurses waiting to come to the UK. We want to accelerate their arrival and induction where possible and provide them with OSCE training by 31 January 2021.
- We will therefore offer funding to safely support their arrival and induction. The funding equates to c.£1500 per nurse and can be used to fund any additional cost elements of IR that have been impacted by COVID-19, including flights, airport transfers, welcome packages, OSCE training and accommodation.
- Some of you will already have planned your international recruitment and have associated funding aligned to this. This package will cover additional costs to trusts to get these nurses that you have already appointed into the UK and OSCE trained by 31 January 2021, eg may cover Airbnb/hotel accommodation, OSCE and induction training in socially distanced environments. The funding is only available for nurses that you appointed before 20 September 2020 and have not yet arrived in the UK.
- We understand there will be circumstances where trusts will have higher costs associated with supporting the arrival and OSCE training of nurses by 31 January (eg specialist training, regional accommodation costs), and we will therefore consider bids for additional funding.
- We have provided a 'supporting evidence' document where you can provide information on your current pipeline, associated costs and evidence.
- Please provide your expression of interest and completed template for **Strand A** by 5pm 9 October 2020. Please send to NHSI.Workforce@nhs.net.

Ensuring future supply (Strand B)

- The second strand is to expand future international nursing supply.
- £25,000-£100,000 is available per trust in 2020/21, depending on the scale of your IR ambition and the size of your organisation. You will be required to provide the key actions you would take to increase international recruitment above planned activity (and the activity observed in 2019/20) and what funding would be required to achieve this.
- Again, we recognise the cost of recruiting overseas nurses will vary depending on your IR approach, and we will therefore assess bids on a case-by-case basis within the range defined above.
- Bids can cover a range of activities designed to expand your international nursing supply, including for example resourcing costs to increase your IR capacity or recruiting new nurses from overseas and supporting them into shortage specialties.
- The template attached will give you an opportunity to bid for funding. Please provide granular information on actions and associated costs and be realistic in terms of planned IR activity.

- We strongly welcome and encourage collaborative bids across NHS organisations and for trusts to pool resources via regional hubs/ sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs)/specialties/sector where possible. This might be to expand or join existing lead recruiter models or to establish, for example, new regional or mental health collaborative recruiter models.
- If you choose to do a collaborative bid, please just submit one expression of interest across your collaboration and the lead organisation would receive the combined funding for all organisations in the bid.
- Should you choose to create or develop a lead recruiter model, our team will be able to provide direct support and guidance to get this started. In the meantime please see the [NHS Employers International Recruitment Toolkit](#), which provides key insights into the benefits of a lead recruiter model, including useful case studies.
- Please provide your expression of interest and completed template for **Strand B** by 5pm 23 October 2020. Please send to NHSI.Workforce@nhs.net.

Strands A-B: bid assessment

- As set out in the letter above, we request you to provide a detailed plan on how you will increase capacity to interview and process applications, and to expedite and increase your intake of internationally recruited nurses, including providing gold standard pastoral care and OSCE training.
- We will require executive support within your organisation.
- The funding will be awarded to directors of nursing so that there is direct oversight of the use of the funds to focus on effective management and a positive experience for the new international nurses.
- **Please ensure all your IR activity adheres to the [Code of Practice for International Recruitment](#). In particular, ensure you do not recruit from developing countries unless there is a government-to-government agreement in place (see [here](#) for the current list of relevant developing countries). This will be a condition in the Memorandum of Understanding between us and trusts on any IR funding support provided.**
- The funding for this year will be an upfront payment to ensure we can quickly accelerate IR plans. However, please be aware we will have the opportunity to claw back this funding if we do not believe you are using this funding appropriately, or fail to increase your IR sufficiently. **Please also be aware that any funding available in future years, will be conditional on your previous year's performance.**
- **Each trust will be expected to report on their progress on nursing IR committed to in this funding application process as an item at the organisation's public board.**

English Language (EL) offer to UK based applicants (Strand C)

- We know from a recent trust data collection there are a significant a number of overseas trained nurses currently working in the NHS as healthcare support workers/healthcare assistants, who have been unable to pass the required EL requirements to join the NMC register.
- We recognise the important contribution these individuals make to the NHS. We are therefore offering financial support to overseas trained nurses based in the UK who have not yet passed the EL requirements, to fund EL exam fees and/or to subsidise EL training support.
- HEE will provide this financial support to trusts to fund EL test fees and locally sourced training.
- Strand C provides two levels of financial support, covering exam fees and educational input.
- Trusts can apply for both for all candidates, regardless of the exam choice and level of English.

Exam fees

- Occupational English Test (OET) exam fee and access to OET online learning materials. (£234 per candidate)
- International English Language Testing System (IELTs) exam fee and access to British Council online learning materials. (£159 per candidate)

Educational costs

- Additional EL training. HEE will provide up to £400 for each candidate to fund educational input relevant to a candidate's chosen examination. Trusts will be responsible for sourcing these programmes locally.
- We ask that you identify the number of individuals that may be eligible for this support in the supporting template attached.
- We would strongly recommend that the 'test-fee only' option is solely aimed at those with very good English language skills who have had a recent marginal fail on the relevant test.
- Education funding: your trust can decide on how best to spend this funding – options may include funding local OET/British Council (BC) approved EL providers (online or face-to-face), sourcing local higher education institution language training or if numbers are large enough offering in-house EL training. Trusts will decide the best option for their locality and nurses and HEE will provide support.
- For guidance on EL training, HEE is working with OET and BC, and will be able to signpost trusts to local EL providers.
- Trusts may be required to top-up some of the EL educational funding depending on the EL requirements of your overseas trained nurses and the training provider selected by your organisation.
- We expect trusts to support all their applicants who pass the EL Test in achieving NMC registration, including support for studying/passing their OSCE.
- Please ensure you provide a main point of contact for your trust in order for HEE to appropriately review the supporting evidence.

Classification: Official

- Please provide your expression of interest and completed template for **Strand C** by 5pm 9 October 2020. Please send to UKIEN.English.Language@hee.nhs.uk.