

NOVEMBER 2015

**A GUIDE TO INVOLVING CHILDREN
AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN
THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**



NHS service users should be at the heart of decisions about services they access, to make sure they adequately reflect their needs.

This guide is intended to support employers who wish to involve children, young people and their families in processes and decisions to recruit staff.

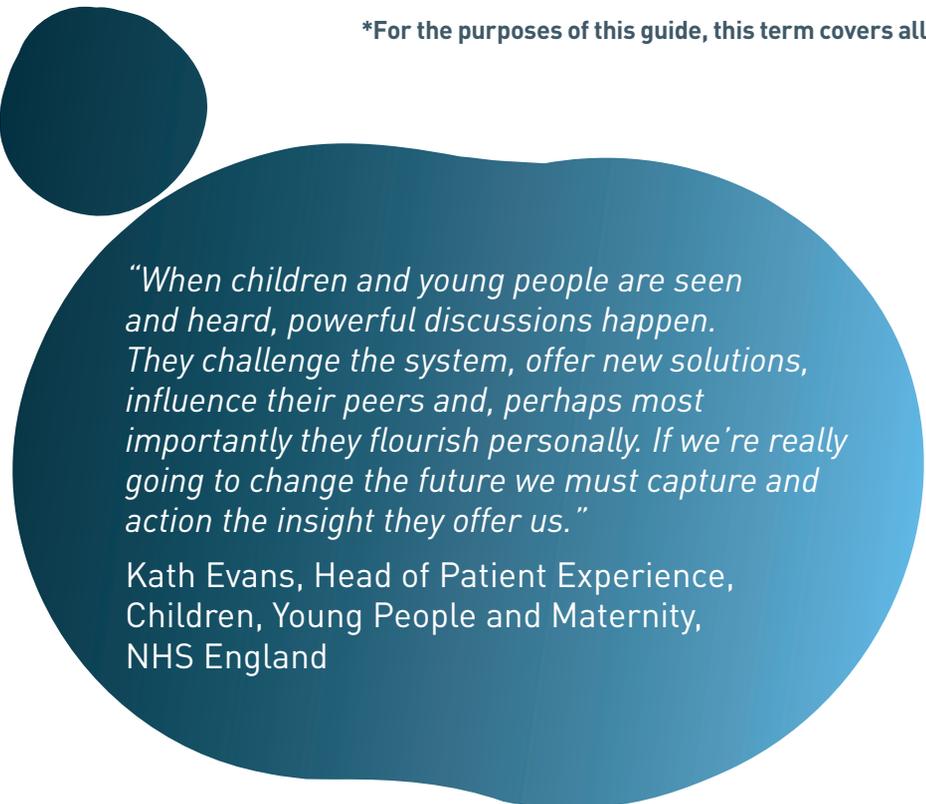
What's in this guide?

This document will help recruiting managers, HR teams, and others involved in recruitment in NHS organisations, to think about:

- the benefits of involving children and young people* in the recruitment process**
- learning from others**
- preparing your organisation – what to consider**
- recruitment activities**
- preparing young people.**

At the back of the document you will find a number of useful checklists to help you plan how to involve children and young people in your recruitment activities.

***For the purposes of this guide, this term covers all age ranges of children and young people.**



“When children and young people are seen and heard, powerful discussions happen. They challenge the system, offer new solutions, influence their peers and, perhaps most importantly they flourish personally. If we're really going to change the future we must capture and action the insight they offer us.”

Kath Evans, Head of Patient Experience,
Children, Young People and Maternity,
NHS England



THE BENEFITS

Organisations that already involve young people in the recruitment process have reported considerable benefits, provided this involvement is carried out in a meaningful, positive and supportive way.

Benefits to the organisation include:

- providing a clear message to existing staff, potential new recruits, funders, partner organisations, and young people, that the involvement and views of young people are at the heart of decision-making in health services
- improving service delivery by selecting candidates whose personal skills and qualities suit the needs of young people
- demonstrating respect for children's rights in action (in line with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of a Child).

Benefits to staff include:

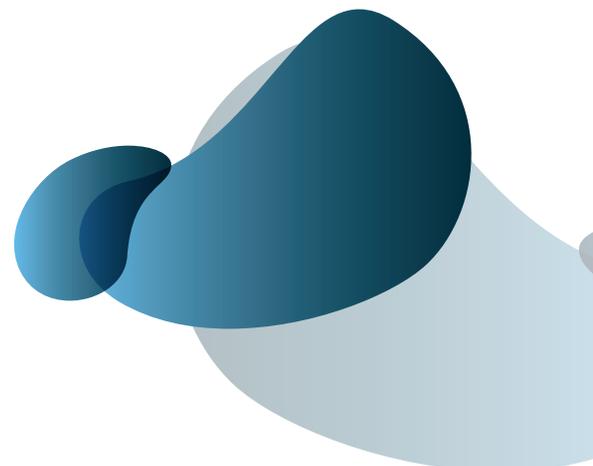
- helping staff to develop new skills in working creatively with young people
- building relationships between young people and staff
- giving staff greater insight into young people's views by communicating with and listening to them.

Benefits to young people include:

- developing valuable skills and experience that will help them in the future
- opportunities to gain accreditation or recognition of their involvement
- improving interpersonal and communication skills with adults and peers
- helping to develop a sense of responsibility and increased confidence
- recognising that their contribution is valued and they have directly influenced appointing the strongest candidates into the services.

The benefits to candidates include:

- opportunities to demonstrate communication/interaction skills with young people
- providing a realistic role preview for those who haven't previously worked with children
- opportunities to interact with the young people they will be working with or providing services for.



LEARNING FROM OTHERS

Organisations that are already bringing young people into the recruitment process

Barnardo's HYPE service in Bristol and South Gloucestershire

Young service users can also be brought into the process by referral from the healthcare professionals providing their care. Barnardo's helping young people to engage (HYPE) service in Bristol and South Gloucestershire has strong links with clinicians who refer young people they are working with to become involved with participation processes such as recruitment. The organisation has a strong culture of participation and staff advocate the importance of making sure young people's voices are heard.

The HYPE service also runs a participation group in a special educational needs school to tailor the approach so that young people with learning difficulties can also be part of the recruitment process. In one set of interviews, young people decorated cakes with the candidates, and then scored them on their communication and relationship-building skills. It is important to explore with young people, including their parents or carers, how potential barriers may be overcome and what support is needed so they can get involved.

Birmingham Children's Hospital

Birmingham Children's Hospital has a young person's advisory group which includes local young people from outside the service. The starting point was to write to all foundation trust members inviting anyone who was interested to a meeting. Around 20 young people turned up and it has since grown by word of mouth without the need for external advertising other than being on the website. The young people involved include aspiring future healthcare professionals and the experience has provided them with valuable insight about the various job roles and service users.

For more information and guidance on engaging with young people as prospective employees, visit NHS Employers' [ThinkFuture](#) web pages.

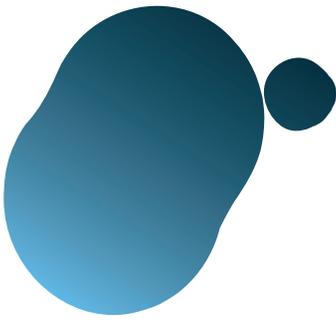


Top tip

Your organisation may already have a young people's forum of current and former service users from which to draw volunteers from. It is also worth being mindful of the balance between service users and non-service users.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

In 2015, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health launched & Us, a patient voice network bringing together children, young people, parents, carers and families from across the UK to improve child health. Young members are included in the recruitment process for any new appointments to senior management posts and into their engagement and participation programme.



Bradford District Care

Bradford District Care has developed an involvement interest form which has been circulated widely to the local population through staff, services, governors, and family and friends. The responses are stored in a database which means they are able to extract details of young people interested in being involved in recruitment and keep track of how many young people are involved.



Top tip

Interest will grow by young people speaking about their involvement. It is therefore important to make the experience positive throughout the process.

Blackpool Victoria Hospital

Part of the induction process at Blackpool Victoria Hospital is that young people provide training of at least one hour to doctors. This is based on the trust's top tips on how to communicate and engage with young patients and includes a role play of consultations. The doctors are asked to write one thing they have discovered through the session and make a related pledge. Staff inductions at Birmingham Children's Hospital include a presentation prepared by a young patient called How to be a cool healthcare professional.

The University of Hertfordshire

The University of Hertfordshire has been involving young people aged nine, ten and 11 in the recruitment of student nurses for five years. As it doesn't have service users, its approach was to contact local primary schools. The university has since built a strong ongoing relationship with one school in particular. Involvement of young people in the recruitment of teachers is well established and head teachers readily see the benefits for the organisation and for their pupils.



Top tip

Be inclusive. Access issues and specific needs of any kind should not preclude a young person from participating. Consider whether the pool of young people is representative of the local population, whether it reflects the black and minority ethnic (BME) community and vulnerable groups and what action can be taken if it does not.



PREPARING YOUR ORGANISATION – WHAT TO CONSIDER

Have you considered which job roles to involve young people in?

Although they can be involved in recruiting for any job role, the most relevant are those involving direct contact with young people or making decisions about the services they access. The decision as to which roles to begin with will vary from organisation to organisation with some choosing top senior roles to demonstrate commitment from the top. For others it may be selecting a small service to pilot and evaluate before rolling out more widely.

Have you considered which young people to involve?

Inviting young people into the process who have already interacted with people in the job role being recruited to, or with the service, brings additional value, although it is not essential. It is useful to be aware of whether any of the young people have current issues or challenges with the service so that they are supported in the best way possible during the process.

Have you considered how to prepare the staff panel?

Involving young people will increase the length of the recruitment process so providing a clear message about the expected benefits when preparing the staff panel is essential. The staff panel, HR representative, and participation officer (or other support person) should start working collaboratively with the young people at an early opportunity to begin building relationships and planning the recruitment activities. Getting the staff panel involved in the young people's training sessions can be a good starting point for this, together with shadowing opportunities, to experience each other's role. Aim for an open culture, a collaborative dynamic, and equality throughout the process.

Feedback from young people shows that an open dialogue with the staff panel makes them feel their contribution is valued. A young person from Barnardo's HYPE said, 'when you're able to highlight something to the senior panel that they agree with but hadn't previously identified, it shows you're valued and brings something genuine to the process.'



Have you considered how to weight the scores?

Weighting can vary depending on how much the job role has direct involvement with young people. The minimum is usually 20 per cent. Consider having a form for the staff panel to complete to provide evidence of how the young people's views have been taken into account. Also, give consideration as to how potential disputes will be resolved between the young people and the staff panel in the event of a clear difference of opinion as to which candidate to appoint.

You can find examples of score sheets in our [useful documents web page](#).

Have you considered what to offer as a reward?

Saying thank you is essential. Providing rewards can help young people to feel valued and can also provide useful evidence of their skills and experience. Rewards could include:

- a follow up email, letter or card
- a certificate of recognition
- reference letters
- letters of acknowledgement to the school or college
- digital badges
- volunteering points
- gift vouchers.

See [NHS Make Waves](#) for further information about digital badges and the national volunteering scheme [vInspired](#) for information about volunteering points.

Birmingham Children's Hospital

Birmingham Children's Hospital arranges social activities rather than providing vouchers. These include Christmas parties, summer picnics, bowling, cinema and miniature golf. This also provides young people with the opportunity for personal development and to acquire new skills.

Have you considered what to do in the event of a disclosure?

If a safeguarding disclosure is made at any stage by young people involved, make sure there is a clear understanding about the process to be followed by the recruiting team.



Have you considered how you will prepare candidates?

The involvement of young people should not come as a surprise to candidates on the day. Prepare candidates by making it clear in the job advertisement that this is part of the process. If the young people have prepared a document or a video, include a link to it in the advert. Include in the interview letter what their specific involvement will be, for example, a young people's interview panel, the weighting, and any pre-interview activity. This also provides a clear message to potential candidates that the views of young people are important to the organisation.

Have you considered consent forms?

Consent forms (especially for those who are under 18) will need to be sent to parents or carers, and to the young person's school or college if the interview, training etc is during school time. These forms should explain what the young person will be doing and the benefits of being involved. The University of Hertfordshire involves children from a local primary school and the head teacher liaises with the parents. The trips to the university are dealt with in the same way as all other school outings for the purpose of risk assessment and insurance.

For examples of protocols, see our [useful documents web page](#).

Have you considered how you will involve parents and carers?

Parents and carers will offer a different perspective highlighting issues that specifically matter to them. Involvement of parents and carers may be particularly helpful in neonatal or health visiting recruitment processes where they can advocate for the younger children and other service users.

If the involvement was an interview, the parent or carer could sit on the young people's panel, the staff panel or a joint panel. Whatever the involvement, the parent or carer would need to be trained in the same topic areas as the young people on the interview process and the job role. The benefits to parents and carers of taking part include refreshing or learning new skills, building and strengthening relationships with staff, learning more about the services, making new contacts and potentially setting up support networks.

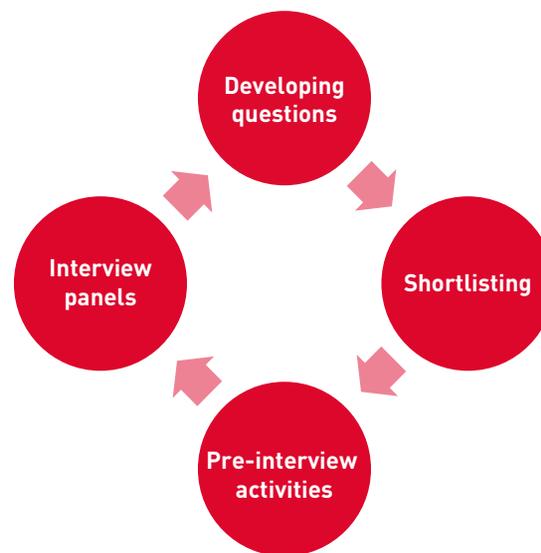
The [National Network of Parent Carers](#) and [Contact a Family](#) have links to local parent groups. The [Council for Disabled Children](#) has online resources, including an expert parent programme to assist in preparing parent/carers for involvement in the NHS.

"I felt it was a brilliant idea for the children to be involved in something which was going to play an important role within their own and other children's futures. Although some people may be good at talking to adults, when talking to children they may not be as good and find it hard to come down to their level and talk in a way that they are going to understand, so finding this out was vital to the role we were looking to pursue."

Student Nurse, University of Hertfordshire

Recruitment activities

Each stage of the recruitment cycle offers opportunities for young people to be involved.



Developing questions and shortlisting

Young people have a different perspective from adult service users, and as such, should be provided with enough information about the job role, to understand the desirable skills and behaviours required. This should feed directly into the job descriptions and person specifications, as well as into the shortlisting process.

In addition, young people will devise their own questions or activities for applicants to enable them to see how well the applicant matches up to the desirable skills and behaviours. It is important to use the young people's own words as they are crafted from a young person's perspective.

Young people can also help to develop job adverts, including posters. Remember to make it clear in the advert that young people have been involved in devising the selection process.

Young people have also suggested including videos with the advert, which could provide a realistic role preview and reduce the number of inappropriate applications. Ideas for video content include:

- a day in the life of the young person
- a day in the life [of the job role]
- a young person describing the qualities they need from the person in that job role.

Be mindful that for ongoing use of media such as videos, young people may wish to withdraw their consent as they get older.

Pre-interview activities

Consider activities that candidates and young people could do together before the formal interview to explore how the candidate interacts and builds rapport. The young people then provide feedback to the staff panel on each candidate before the formal interview to inform their questioning.

A few activities to consider beforehand:

- planning a party
- cake making
- playing games
- icebreakers
- having tea and biscuits.

A young service user telling their experience of the care they have received from the NHS before the interview, provides a real awareness for the candidate of what the job role entails, and is much richer than a job description alone. It gives a powerful insight into how the skills and behaviours of the person in that job role impacts on their care.

Example questions

How will you ensure that young patients' opinions and concerns about treatment are listened to and dealt with?

Blackpool Victoria Hospital

How would you cope if the child you were looking after dies?

University of Hertfordshire

Interview panels

Interview panels often take the form of two separate panels, one for young people, and the staff panel (also known as professional panel or senior panel). For fairness, try to ensure that every candidate experiences the panels in the same order. There can also be joint panels with young people representatives sitting on the staff panel. Some organisations use a combination of both depending on the role being recruited to.

"I learned that I enjoy interviewing people even if they're older than me. Also that grown-ups get scared of children."

Young person, University of Hertfordshire

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DAY

Timings

Take into account what time young people will need to set off from home when deciding the start times for interviews. Ensure sufficient time is allowed between each interview for reflection and discussion with the staff panel and factor in time for comfort breaks. Inevitably there will be no shows on the day which may create lengthy gaps so plan ahead for what the young people can be doing during this time.

Location

Depending on the base for the job role, if this is a location that the young people are already familiar with, consider whether this would be a suitable interview venue rather than a headquarters building. Consider access issues for wheelchair users.

Transport arrangements

Be clear about whose responsibility it will be to get young people to and from the interviews. Will it be the organisation, school, parents or carers? Make sure that all parties know the arrangements. Be aware that travel expenses will most likely need to be reimbursed if the organisation isn't arranging transport. For some young people, such as those in care or with disabilities, providing a taxi is recommended.

Individual needs of young people

Make sure the room is comfortable and facilities are easily available and accessible. Young people should be given time to arrange the layout of the interview room as they wish. Meals should be provided together with drinks and snacks.

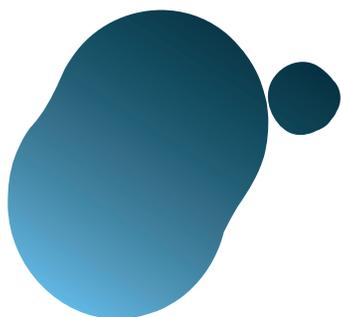


PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE

Think about providing training for young people to ensure that they know how to do what is being asked of them and why they are being asked to do it.

Your training programme could include:

- understanding the importance of selecting the right candidate
- understanding the whole interview or assessment process
- questioning techniques
- choosing, developing questions and assessment tasks
- listening skills
- how to interact with the candidates
- taking notes and recording
- identifying what makes a good or bad candidate
- being non-judgmental and an understanding of equalities issues
- scoring the candidates
- confidentiality (in relation to candidates and other young people involved)
- decision-making process – how their scores and feedback will be used to make the final decision
- providing feedback to candidates.





Nottingham Children's Hospital

Nottingham Children's Hospital's preparing for interview workshop is part of its young people's recruitment training day. Young people can use this as an accredited module towards the Youth Achievement Awards and similar accreditations. You can find further information about this on our [involving children and young people](#) web page.

The trust recommends that all materials provided to young people are jargon-free and that the staff panel are reminded of this. If it's not possible to be totally jargon-free, provide a jargon-buster, or try Blackpool Victoria Hospital's idea of playing jargon-buster bingo. Any reading material should be provided at least one to two weeks in advance so they have time to prepare and ask any questions.

Training or briefing sessions will need to be held prior to the interview or activity to talk over the specific job role, what the staff panel will be looking for, and the young people's part in the process. This is also the time to develop the questions or scenarios that will be used. If possible, involve a member of the staff panel, a nominated person who the young people will be feeding back to, to build relationships. This session could also include a discussion about the team the successful candidate will be working in, the benefits of teams, and the importance of diversity of people and skills.

A facilitator or supporter should sit in the interviews and activities with young people to deal with any challenges that might arise, ensure fairness, as a safeguard for the young people, and any other support that may be required. The facilitator or supporter may also take notes so that the young person can focus on listening and interacting with the candidate.

Birmingham Children's Hospital

At Birmingham Children's Hospital, the facilitator steps out of the room to allow the young people to have discussions on their own and then returns to collate what has been agreed. This feedback is also provided to the candidate if requested. For example, the chief medical officer at the trust received candidate feedback following appointment and reported that the young people's assessment was 'absolutely spot on'.

Feedback from young people has also highlighted the importance of being well prepared. As a result, the trust suggests that organisations consider developing model answers to interview questions, let them know in advance what questions the staff panel will be asking and who will be on the panel. Giving young people an opportunity to practise and role play ahead of the interview or assessment will help to build confidence and develop skills.

POST-INTERVIEW ACTIVITY

A prompt and sincere thank you letter following the interviews or other assessment activity is a must.

Notification of the outcome of the interviews should be sent to the young people as soon as possible which also explains why the person was chosen. This ideally should come from the chair of the staff panel or the nominated person to interact with the young people on the day.

If time permits on the day, arrange a debrief straight after, both in a group and individually, to allow for reflection and to receive feedback on performance.

A debrief meeting will provide insight into what went well and what could be improved upon next time. Evaluation questionnaires can also be used to capture feedback from young people, recruiting managers and candidates.

You will find an example of a young people/parents evaluation form from Barnardo's South West on our [involving children and young people](#) web page.

CHECKLISTS:



Preparing the organisation	✓
Consider which job roles to involve young people in.	
Identify the young people to be part of the recruitment process.	
Collaborate early between the staff panel, HR, participation officer and young people.	
Devise young people-friendly training activities.	
Select which recruitment activities the young people will be involved in.	
Ensure young people's involvement is meaningful.	
Agree how the young people will be rewarded.	
Make it clear to candidates that young people will be involved, what their involvement will be, and the impact that will have on the final decision.	
Send consent forms (especially for those who are under 18) to parents or carers, and to their school or college.	
Considerations on the day	✓
Consider timings for interviews.	
No shows on the day may create lengthy gaps so plan what the young people can do during this time.	
Consider location and accessibility.	
Be clear about transport arrangements.	
Identify individual needs of the young people attending.	
Consider the environment.	
Provide meals and drinks.	
A facilitator or supporter should sit in the interviews or activities with young people.	
Make sure there is a safeguarding disclosure process in place.	



Preparing young people	
Make sure young people are clear about how to do what is being asked of them and why they are being asked to do it.	✓
Arrange a briefing session in the run-up to the interview or activity to talk about the specific job role, what the staff panel will be looking for, the young people's part in the process, and developing the activities.	
Make sure all materials are jargon-free and sent at least one to two weeks in advance.	
Post-interview activity	
Send a prompt and sincere thank you letter.	✓
Notify young people of the outcome of the interview as soon as possible and explain why the person was chosen.	
Arrange a debrief straight after, both group and individual, to allow for reflection and to receive feedback on performance.	
Continuously evaluate and review the process.	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

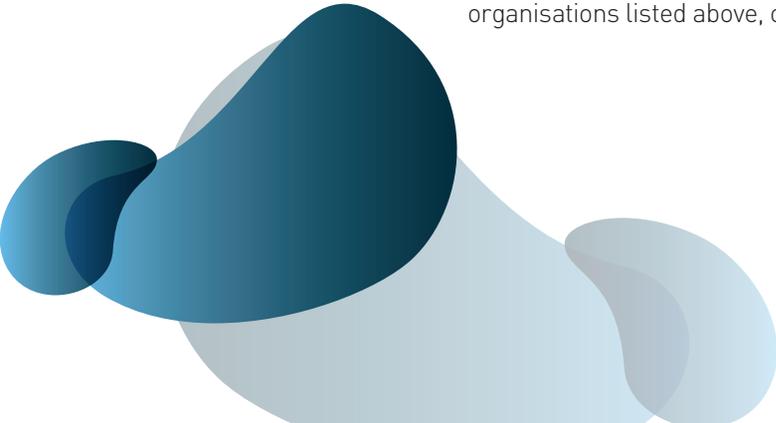
This guidance has been prepared in collaboration with the following organisations:

- Association of Chief Children's Nurses
- Barnardo's South West
- Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust
- CLIC Sargent
- Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Newcastle University Hospital/Great Northern Children's Hospital
- Nottingham Children's Hospital
- NHS England
- North Bristol NHS Trust
- Royal College of Nursing, London
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust
- The GIFT Partnership
- University of Hertfordshire

Special thanks to Emily Roberts and her colleagues at Barnardo's South West for arranging and facilitating focus groups with young people, staff and recruiting managers involved in recruitment at North Bristol NHS Trust. Feedback from the focus groups has been drawn upon in this guidance.

Further reading

You will find a number of useful documents, including example templates from the organisations listed above, on our [involving children and young people](#) web page.



NHS Employers

The NHS Employers organisation is the voice of employers in the NHS, supporting them to put patients first. Our vision is to be the authoritative voice of workforce leaders, experts in HR, negotiating fairly to get the best deal for patients.

We help employers make sense of current and emerging healthcare issues to ensure that their voice is front and centre of health policy and practice. We keep them up to date with the latest workforce thinking and expert opinion, providing practical advice and information, and generating opportunities to network and share knowledge and best practice.

We work with employers in the NHS to reflect their views and act on their behalf in four priority areas:

- pay and negotiations
- recruitment and planning the workforce
- healthy and productive workplaces
- employment policy and practice.

The NHS Employers organisation is part of the NHS Confederation.

Contact us

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