

Trade body responds to Wes Streeting's NHS reform plans

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Responding to Health and Social Care Secretary, Wes Streeting's, presentation at today's NHS conference, Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) comments:

"It is promising to see the continued recognition from the Labour Government that there's an attraction and retention issue in the NHS, particularly across highly skilled and leadership clinical and non-clinical roles. The leadership college announced is certainly a step in the right direction, but it is essential that the Government also recognises that recruiters are part of the longer-term solution, not the problem. Staffing businesses know how to source the critical skills that the NHS needs. Until this is recognised, the plans for longer term reforms – including digitising the NHS – simply won't happen.

"Banning the use of agencies to cover resourcing gaps at a time when the NHS is already on its knees, announced earlier this week, should also be carefully considered. Yes, costs need to be streamlined, but there are other means of doing so without placing further pressures on an already under-resourced sector. Whatever approach, it is key that the Government protects access to genuine agency workers. Niche temporary recruitment, agency work to cover absences, and highly skilled clinical and non-clinical roles such as IT and digital, will all be required to reform the NHS.

"There may be some scope to reduce agency reliance on lower skilled staffing solutions, but this simply can't be replicated across all temporary resources and we hope that this will not be the case. The NHS needs to view all worker supply holistically as one workforce to increase efficiency.

"The plans to ban those in permanent jobs from resigning and moving into temporary work must also be reviewed with longer-term impacts in mind. This is often a personal choice rather than one driven by staffing businesses, which inadvertently reduces the number of people recruiters can put forward for work. If this option is removed, it risks further damaging recruitment and retention in the sector, and also doesn't account for the number of permanent professionals that are already supplementing their income through additional temporary work. If this happens, questions will need to be asked as to how the Government will be able to fill new gaps that emerge."

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About APSCo

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) is the trade association for the professional recruitment market. APSCo Global comprises APSCo Asia, APSCo Australia, APSCo Deutschland and APSCo United Kingdom as well as APSCo OutSource, the trade body for the RPO and MSP sectors.

Find out more: www.apscouk.org