

# Tech isn't the sole solution to the NHS crisis: Employment reforms have to be prioritised

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While the plans to capitalise on technology and AI to support the NHS are welcome news, the employment crisis for clinical and non-clinical roles in healthcare needs to be prioritised. That's according to the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO).

In its submission in response to the Big Conversation, the trade body for the professional staffing sector called on the Government to consider core solutions to the worker crisis in healthcare, including:

- Boosting collaboration: Forming a partnership with NHS employers and other stakeholders is required to deliver the long-term workforce plan in a timely manner. This should include collaboration with those that will be crucial in supplying the non-clinical staff needed to drive digital transformation in the NHS.

- Reforming hiring practices: Focusing on temporary staff reforms to reduce "off framework" placements without eliminating agency worker access altogether.

- Improving compliance and standards: Officials should mandate that NHS employer standards are in line with Government requirements and compliance is consistent across providers and frameworks.

- Developing a Digital Work Passport: This would hold key credentials for workers to help make hiring easier, faster and safer.

- Utilising a blended workforce: The Government must recognise the value of a blended, flexible workforce and ensure attractive pay rates and good working conditions for all.

- Understanding the reality of costs: The NHS and Government departments need to conduct independent research to understand the true cost of compliant framework recruitment.

- Mandating social value in supply chains: "Social value" must be driven across the supply chain, for example by sharing contractual risk and bearing increased statutory costs, such as employer NICs increases. All too often the SME recruitment company on-framework is expected to bear employer costs within its commercial margin.

- Supporting skills and training: Rolling out the Growth and Skills Levy, based around modular, universally transferable training and qualifications that are accessible to permanent and temporary or agency workers.

- Creating flexible visas for skilled workers: Which will provide a short-term visa route for highly skilled foreign professionals who remain critical to the running of the NHS and the provision of unique services.

Shazia Imtiaz, General Counsel at APSCo comments:

“The plans to modernise technology usage in the NHS are certainly a step in the right direction for an organisation that is essentially on its knees. However, the biggest issue that needs addressing urgently is the employment crisis. There’s a range of barriers that are preventing some of the immediate solutions from being rolled out, including a lack of standardisation in compliance and regulation across frameworks, as well as limitations on agency or international worker usage.

“We are urging the Government to consider how it can make recruitment fairer, safer and faster for clinical and non-clinical role in the NHS, without overburdening both the existing workforce and the staffing businesses that are so critical to the healthcare sector.”

Press contact

Vickie Collinge

vickie@bluesky-pr.com

01582 790 705

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.

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