

Wider team support central to coaxing GPs back to work

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Responding to a new campaign designed to encourage hundreds of family doctors to return to general practice, which has this week been launched by NHS England and Health Education England, Michael Johnson-Ellis, Managing Director at Healthier Recruitment, commented:

“The NHS is keen to promote the message that its GP Induction and Refresher (I&R) Scheme - which was relaunched in 2016 - has been responsible for 800 GPs coming out of retirement. However, it is less keen to share the fact that this has hardly made a dent on the talent the NHS needs to keep the wheels in motion: recent research from Warwick Medical School found that 42% of GPs plan to quit in the next five years. The Royal College of General Practitioners, meanwhile, estimates we are already short 6,000 GPs – that’s around one per practice. A separate NHS scheme to recruit family doctors from overseas has also fallen flat, managing to attract just 50 GPs against a target of 2,000 professionals.

“The reality is that, while the UK does have sufficient talent to fill permanent NHS posts, poor workforce planning strategies are responsible for pushing vital skills out of the healthcare sector. We have long advised that individual trusts must ensure that they build teams in a way which is conducive to long-term retention – and it seems that this latest campaign recognises this crucial point.

“Through promoting the message that the NHS is committed to recruiting an additional 22,000 health professionals to support its GPs - including social prescribing link workers and physician associates - it is hoped that doctors who left the profession due to unmanageable workloads will return. While it would be remiss to suggest that this campaign alone will solve the ongoing staff shortages that continue to plague the NHS, this shift in mind-set indicates that the latest Long Term Plan is taking a more holistic view of talent management, which is desperately needed, and I’m confident that it’s a step in the right direction.”

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