

Code of Conduct on ethical cross-border recruitment and retention: Implementation in the UK

NHS European Office

Hospitals and Healthcare
Sector Social Dialogue

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Implementation in the UK

- UK Code of Practice based on WHO/EPSU-HOSPEEM CoP
- NHS Employers is national body responsible for overseeing implementation of the Code, and provides support to employers
- Code applies to ALL healthcare professionals
- NHS Employers has a list of commercial recruitment agencies that adhere to the Code - NHS organisations should only use these approved agencies

Key points

- Any international recruitment of healthcare professionals should not prejudice the healthcare systems of developing countries. Healthcare professionals should not be actively recruited from developing countries, unless there is a government-to-government agreement to support recruitment activities.
- All employers are strongly advised to adhere to the code in all matters concerning the international recruitment of healthcare professionals.
- Any recruitment agency that wishes to supply the NHS must also comply with the code.
- The code offers principles and best practice benchmarks to be met to supply international healthcare professionals in an ethical and managed way.

7 guiding principles underpin the Code of Practice (1)

- International recruitment is a sound and legitimate contribution to the development of the healthcare workforce.
- Developing countries will not be targeted for recruitment, unless there is an explicit government-to-government agreement with the UK to support recruitment activities.
- Extensive opportunities exist for individuals in terms of training and education and the enhancement of clinical practice.
- International healthcare professionals will have equitable support and access to further education and training and continuing professional development as all other employees.

7 guiding principles underpin the Code of Practice (2)

- International healthcare professionals will have a level of knowledge and proficiency comparable to that expected of an individual trained in the UK.
- International healthcare professionals will demonstrate a level of English language proficiency consistent with safe and skilled communication with patients, clients, carers and colleagues.
- International healthcare professionals legally recruited from overseas to work in the UK are protected by relevant UK employment law in the same way as all other employees.

Best practice benchmarks (1):

All organisations that comply with the code will apply these best practice benchmarks and will enter into contracts solely with recruitment agencies that also abide by them.

- No active recruitment of healthcare professionals from developing countries.
- All international recruitment by healthcare employers will follow good recruitment practice and demonstrate a sound ethical approach.
- International healthcare professionals will not be charged fees to gain employment.
- Appropriate information about the role applied for will be available.
- All international healthcare professionals will have the appropriate level of English language to enable them to undertake their role effectively and meet registration requirements of the appropriate regulatory body.
- All appointed professionals must be registered with the appropriate UK regulatory body.

Best practice benchmarks (2):

- All international healthcare professionals will undergo the normal health assessment prior to commencing employment.
- All will have appropriate checks undertaken for any criminal convictions or cautions as required by UK legislation.
- All international healthcare professionals offered a post will have a valid work permit before entry to the UK unless they are from the EEA.
- Employers should respond appropriately to international healthcare professionals who are making an individual application.
- All professionals required to undertake supervised practice should be fully supported in this process.
- All newly appointed international healthcare professionals will be offered appropriate support and induction.

[Case studies and examples of good practice](#) (click on link for more examples)

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust delivered a learning programme to help their international staff understand and use conversational English
- An innovative preparation programme including workbooks and mock exams helps internationally-recruited nurses at Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals to pass the entry test to join the nursing register
- Gloucestershire Hospitals created a training programme to help overseas qualified nurses working as healthcare assistants become registered nurses
- North Lincolnshire and Goole used a values based assessment centre to recruit nurses from Spain.