

Solving recruitment and retention issues in Estates, Facilities and Capital roles at Northern Care Alliance (NCA) NHS Foundation Trust

Case study summary

An alternative approach to addressing recruitment difficulties, especially in specialist and technical roles across estates, facilities and capital teams.

In collaboration with the resourcing and apprenticeship teams, posts are advertised with the additional option for individuals to apply who do not hold the essential role specific qualification.

'Gateway' posts are advertised (as substantive roles) at one band lower than the approved band, with guaranteed advancement to the approved band on successful completion of the predetermined academic programme or agreed length of experience.

'Pathway Posts' are for new and existing staff who agree to a development and training plan with a view to progression when opportunities arise.

This results in a higher number of strong applicants, shortlisted individuals, attendees at interview and successful appointment.

Gateway posts have been invaluable in improving the opportunities available within NHS estates, facilities & capital teams at NCA, providing an opportunity for new talent to enter a profession they are passionate about or for existing staff to change career.

These opportunities provide both new and existing staff with a clear and agreed career progression plan, resulting in increased applicants from both within NCA and from external candidates.

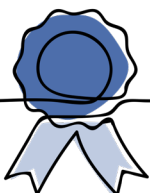
Feedback from applicants identified that specialist roles are extremely difficult to access without the qualifications and relevant experience. This option provides a solution to both those issues in a structured and supported way.



Northern Care Alliance
NHS Foundation Trust



We are
compassionate
and **inclusive**



We are **recognised**
and **rewarded**



We each have
a voice that
counts



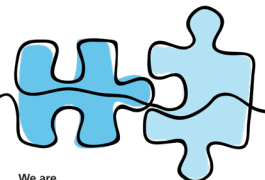
We are
safe and
healthy



We are
always
learning



We work
flexibly



We are
a team

Organisation

Northern Care Alliance NHS Trust. (Royal Oldham Hospital, Salford Royal, Fairfield General Hospital, Rochdale Infirmary)

What was the aim/problem?

Problems seen nationally for the estates and facilities workforce were all present at BWC including:

- Difficulty in recruiting to various specialist roles due to the qualifications, skills, knowledge, and experience required, for example, failure to recruit to the role of Sustainability Manager after twice going out to advert.
- Difficulty recruiting qualified and experienced specialist trades people in estates and facilities, for example, for Electro Biomedical Engineering posts are in high demand because all hospitals need their equipment maintaining and are therefore 'fishing from the same pond'.

What was the solution?

Gateway' and 'Pathway' Posts

To successfully recruit and fill the gap candidates have in either their academic knowledge or experience, NCA have found one solution which is to appoint at a lower band and then provided support to upskill either by academic qualifications or work experience. This is called a GATEWAY post.

PATHWAY posts are the more traditional method of recruiting to a particular band where the individual remains in this post until another, higher level post is advertised. They are supported to develop whilst in the pathway post but with no guarantee of pay/band progression.

Potential candidates with no academic qualifications, but some experience?

The job vacancy advertisement would make clear that if academic qualification was needed, the opportunity to obtain the qualification was available while working on a lower pay band and achieving the approved pay band on completion of the academic qualification.

Potential candidates with academic qualifications but no experience?

The job vacancy advertisement also made clear that if the candidate had the academic qualification but not the experience, the support would be offered to gain the necessary experience at whatever was deemed as necessary for the post. The candidate gains the experience on a lower pay band and achieves the approved pay band on completion of experience gained in the agreed timescale.

What were the challenges?

No challenges as the team had support from HR, resourcing, apprenticeship and finance teams at NCA.

What were the results?

Recruitment and retention into 'hard to fill roles', for example:

- **Hannah:** Sustainability Manager - Offered a permanent gateway post at lower band and apprenticeship package to achieve higher band in 2 years.
- **Amar:** Electro Bio Medical Engineering (EBME) Technician – Offered a permanent gateway post at lower band and studying HNC electronics at a local college via Estates CPD funding.
- **Megan:** Trainee Fire Safety Advisor. Offered a permanent gateway post and studying Level 4 Fire Safety Officer, followed by level 4 Building Regulations diploma for 3 years to progress through 2 bands in 6 years.
- **Pat:** Medical Device Service Assistant. Offered permanent pathway post, originally as a band 3. Pat successfully applied for a band 4-5 gateway post and has progressed through two pay bands within 5 years. On completion of L3 Leadership Apprenticeship Pat is now Medical Device Support and Library Manager

What were the learning points?

HR and Recruitment Team 'buy in':

At the point of recruitment, HR and recruitment teams were engaged to obtain agreement for this course of action. All the information was written into the recruitment documents, including the job advertisement. If the candidate was recruited at the lower band on a gateway post, HR was informed so all the documentation was correct.

Clear wording of opportunity on job advertisement:

The advert clearly stated that if the candidate had the required qualifications, skills and experience they would be recruited at the appropriate band. It also clearly stated that if they did not have this, they would be recruited at the pay band below and supported to achieve the higher band as required via academic route and / or on the job experience. Example of job advertisement wording used at NCA:

'The Northern Care Alliance (NCA) are seeking to recruit a highly motivated individual to join the team as Estates and Facilities (E&F) Carbon & Energy Manager.

This post is a Band 6/7 and for candidates with a degree but who do not have experience in the field of sustainability but are wanting to apply to a training post, band 6 with a guaranteed band 7 on successful completion of the identified training.'

Substantive roles:

NCA avoided any temporary contracts as they felt in the current economic climate this is more equitable and appropriate. They advertised the roles as substantive posts with an apprenticeship or training package.

Local Recruitment:

The team do not necessarily advertise on NHS Jobs or to a national audience – they work with the recruitment team to deliver targeted recruitment to a cohort of learners in a local college.

College Engagement:

Traditionally the course content on electrical courses at the local college did not highlight the opportunities within healthcare to college students. Staff now attend and provide presentations on work carried out in healthcare. This has led to a whole cohort of young people willing to come in at pay band three who we can support right up to pay band seven or eight via gateway and pathway posts.

Next steps and sustainability?

Following the success of this approach, Estates, Facilities & Capital teams at NCA are adopting a similar method for existing staff wishing to progress in their career. Identification of gateway and pathway posts advertising internally and supporting team members to develop both academically and experientially with the guarantee of promotion on successful completion of the programmes.

Want to know more?

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