RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Job applicants offered £6k to stay in hard-to-fill posts

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An NHS employer has offered a £6,000 ‘golden hello’ for community mental health nurse recruits who stay for at least a year. Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT) invited applications for four band 6 roles in the adult community team and offered the incentive in a bid to attract candidates to posts that have been vacant for some time. Successful applicants were to receive £1,500 of the bonus straight away, with a further £1,500 paid after six months and the remaining £3,000 at the end of their first year.

A trust spokesperson said: ‘HPFT do not routinely offer recruitment and retention premium payments. In extremis, where we have been unable to fulfil critical roles for a sustained period of time we will consider it as one of a number of initiatives to resolve the situation.’

Other employers have made similar offers: Humber Teaching Foundation Trust promised a one-off £3,000 bonus to newly qualified nurses last year and Cheshire and Wirral Partnership gave nurses joining its mental health and learning disability teams £4,500.

The offers point to the struggles employers have in attracting staff in certain areas and come as NHS vacancy statistics show 18.5% of nursing posts at mental health trusts in England were unfilled in September 2023, representing 13,821 vacancies. Almost one third (31.3%) of all nursing vacancies in England are in mental health trusts.

The RCN warned the incentives merely pass recruitment issues around regions. The college’s nursing director for England Patricia Marquis said: ‘The crisis in the nursing workforce is forcing trusts to use ad hoc local financial incentives in a desperate attempt to attract and retain the staff they urgently need.

‘We can’t rely on golden hellos and relocation bonuses – this simply moves the problem from one trust to the next.Trusts are also being forced to spend huge amounts of money on agency staff to plug gaps.

‘The NHS needs a national solution to the national nursing workforce crisis – and that’s fair pay.’

Her message on pay was echoed by Unison, which has called on England’s health and social care secretary Victoria Atkins to open pay talks for 2024-25 as a matter of urgency. The union notified the NHS Pay Review Body (RB) of its decision not to give evidence to it, claiming the RB process ‘takes too long and is neither sufficiently independent, nor fit for purpose’.

The RCN submitted its formal evidence to the RB on 23 February and called for a substantial above-inflation pay rise for its members and additional payments worth ‘several thousand pounds’ to retain nurses. It also highlighted flaws in the RB process and the need for the body to prove its independence.

REGULATION

NMC suspected registration fraud hearings to start shortly

Hearings of cases of dozens of NHS nurses who are suspected of fraudulently gaining registration will all be expected to retake if they want to register in the UK. By 11 January, 1,345 of the 1,955 individuals had booked or retaken their tests, the NMC said. It said passing the test on retake would not guarantee registration.

NMC chief executive Andrea Sutcliffe said: ‘Internationally educated nurses and midwives make an important contribution to our health and social care system. However, our paramount concern is to protect the public by maintaining the integrity of the register.’