

## Reducing healthcare support worker vacancies – case studies

### Creating opportunities, not barriers

#### Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

#### What was the problem?

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust faced several challenges recruiting and retaining healthcare support workers (HCSWs). The area is isolated and coastal, with significant deprivation and low education rates.

Its recruitment processes were flawed: the trust required acute clinical experience but was the only site in the area that provided acute clinical experience. In addition, opportunities for progressing in an HCSW role were scarce.

As a result, the trust experienced a significant rise in the HCSW vacancy rate and had problems with safe staffing and quality of care.

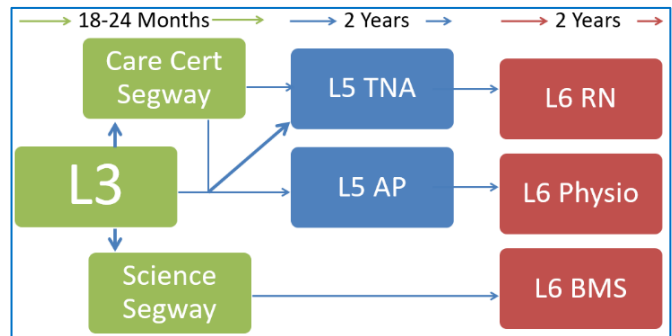
#### What was the solution?

The trust sought a better understanding of the local workforce, identifying external barriers it faced in the community and internal ones when trying to get a job at the trust.

The trust developed an aspiration and access programme, 'Career Confidence', which encouraged local people to explore the possibilities on offer to new HCSWs, and it advertised apprenticeships with clear career pathways.



The HCSW career pathway structure was redesigned (see figure, right) and promoted to showcase how the trust could support and develop those in its local community who might not have access to such opportunities elsewhere.



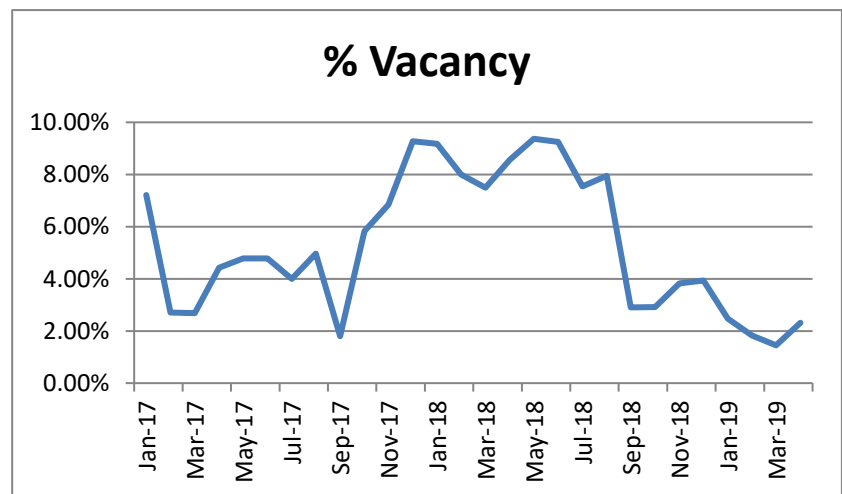
## What were the challenges?

Some potential recruits failed because of local educational challenges: otherwise suitable candidates did not have the requisite English and maths qualifications. To mitigate this, the trust offered support in completing these qualifications using funded programmes from a training provider – therefore at no cost to the trust.

## What were the results?

HCSW vacancies reduced significantly (see figure, right), leading to an all-time low of under 2% in March 2019.

In addition, the trust now has a much better understanding of the local community, which will allow sustainable recruitment to continue.



## What were the learning points?

Investment in community and understanding the local population is invaluable: first, to understand why positions are not being filled or staff are leaving, and then to understand how to mitigate these problems and support the local community to thrive.

## Next steps and sustainability

The trust is continuing a programme of development in the community through career confidence courses so that local people feel supported in their careers as HCSWs, even if they did not achieve success at school. It plans to offer career progression in the trust, focusing on apprenticeships in areas such as biomedical science, cardiophysiology, neurophysiology and nursing associate and assistant practitioner roles.

## Want to know more?

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