



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health Department
Workforce Directorate

Dear Colleague

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF INTERNATIONALLY QUALIFIED NURSES IN NHSSCOTLAND

Purpose

1. This letter introduces a strategy to assist NHS Boards in the recruitment and retention of Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQNs) into hard to fill posts. It does not conflict with recruitment and placement of newly qualified nurses. The strategy is aimed at helping NHS Boards identify IQNs and offers funding to cover educational costs and a 3 month supernumerary post for the IQN. It will provide practical help and support to the IQN to obtain registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and subsequent employment.

Background

2. The number of IQNs contacting NHS Boards seeking supervised practice placements has been increasing steadily over the past few years. In view of this, an expert working group was established in 2005 to review current practice, share good practice and engage with all relevant stakeholders – including the independent sector. The group provided a report on its findings entitled “Routes to Practice” and this can be found at <http://www.workinginhealth.com/workforce/files/routestopractice.doc>. In summary the report recommended supporting and funding IQNs wishing to work as a nurse in NHSScotland; the setting up of a central support and enquiry point for recruitment and retention of IQNs; and the recruitment of 3 Overseas Nursing Facilitators to provide dedicated support.

3. The new recruitment arrangements have been piloted in East and West Regions and have proved successful. The pilot originally aimed at recruiting and supporting 15 IQNs. However, 24 IQNs have been recruited to East and West

13 September 2006

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards and
Special Health Boards;
Directors of Human Resources, NHS
Boards and Special Health Boards

For information

Medical Directors, NHS Boards and
Special Health Boards;
Scottish workforce and Staff
Governance Committee;
Scottish Partnership Forum
Diversity Task Force
Regional Workforce Directors

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Regions. Also, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) established a central support and enquiry point for IQNs within the Centralised Applications to Nursing and Midwifery Training Clearing House (CATCH). Between January 2006 and August 2006 a total of 409 Overseas Nursing Programme leaflets have been issued as a result of enquiries and 60 application packs have been issued.

4. Based on the successful pilot, the key elements of the strategy will now be rolled out across NHSScotland. The strategy will be open to all IQNs but will be marketed at IQNs currently living in Scotland and will aim to fill currently identified hard to fill posts. 3 Overseas Nursing Facilitators are in the process of being appointed whose role will be to provide advice and support. Guidance on how the strategy will operate is attached at Annex A.

5. Funding of £5,000 per IQN will be available to support the running of the strategy. This will cover educational costs involved and will enable NHS Boards to facilitate a 3 month period of supernumerary supervised practice, which will include 20 days protected learning time for all IQNs.

Action

6. Details of the strategy should be made available to the appropriate NHS Board staff.

Yours sincerely

LYNN ANDERSON
Head of Reputation and Attraction Unit

ANNEX A

GUIDANCE FOR THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF INTERNATIONALLY QUALIFIED NURSES (IQNs) IN NHSSCOTLAND

Background

1. Increasing numbers of Internationally Qualified Nurses (IQNs) have been applying to NHSScotland Boards seeking supervised practice placements. In order to demonstrate fitness for practice, IQNs are required to complete an Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP) and a period of supervised practice. Many IQNs are already resident in Scotland and currently working as senior carers or health care support workers. Most are seeking a long term nursing career in the NHS and to settle here indefinitely.
2. Current timing is advantageous in setting out a structure for a national model to recruit and retain IQNs. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), who are the regulators for nurses and midwives, have recently overhauled their standards for supervised practice. The NMC maintains a register of all nurses and midwives and sets the standards for their education, training and conduct. These new standards, known as the Overseas Nurses Programme, will be more rigorous in ensuring that IQNs are competent, fully prepared and safe to work with patients before they are registered.
3. The IQN strategy will help NHS Boards engage with IQNs wishing a career as a nurse in NHSScotland and provide funding and support to enable the IQN to gain registration with the NMC and subsequent employment. It will be open to all IQNs but will be marketed at IQNs currently living in Scotland and will aim to fill currently identified hard to fill posts.

Information Database

4. NHS Education for Scotland (NES) have established a central support and enquiry point for IQNs within the Centralised Applications to Nursing and Midwifery Training Clearing House (CATCH). CATCH will deal with all general enquiries from applicants and either send appropriate information or direct the caller to someone who can answer their query. CATCH also receive completed applications and will forward these to the applicants first NHS Board of choice for them to process according to their recruitment procedures. If the NHS Board does not wish to process applications at any time, CATCH will hold the application until the NHS Board is ready and will keep the applicant informed of progress. CATCH are not responsible for making any judgements about specialties and suitability for posts. Such decisions have to be made by the NHS Board. The database currently holds details of IQNs seeking a career as a nurse in NHSScotland. If you have a hard to fill vacancy which has already been advertised but not filled and you wish more information on the applications currently held by CATCH then you should in the first instance contact Lorna Hendrie, NHS Education for Scotland, CATCH/Careers Manager on telephone number 0131-220-8661 or e-mail careers@nes.scot.nhs.uk
5. It is expected that once suitably registered with the NMC, the IQN will be in a position to take up the identified hard to fill vacancy on a permanent basis. Under the terms of the strategy, all IQNs will be expected to remain in NHSScotland for a period of 2 years following registration and IQNs gaining registration but not committing to NHSScotland may be asked to repay the educational element of the funding provided. An evaluation of the strategy will take place which will monitor retention levels as well as consider the overall effectiveness of the strategy. It should also be borne in mind that it is not possible to guarantee IQNs permanent employment before they gain registration with the NMC.

Funding

6. Funding for the strategy will be issued to NES initially and will include £5,000 for each IQN taking part in the strategy. This level of funding will cover educational fees and enable NHS Boards to facilitate a 3 month period of supernumerary supervised practice, which will include 20 days protected learning time for all IQNs.

Immigration Rules

7. Current immigration rules require all IQNs to have a work permit. Recent changes have seen nurses in Agenda for Change bands 5 and 6 removed from the shortage occupation list held by the Home Office. This means that IQNs at these grades can only obtain jobs where the employer has already advertised the vacancy but has been unable to recruit a suitable UK/EEA nurse. NHS Boards will be required to demonstrate this is the case to the Home Office. By targeting the strategy at hard to fill posts, which by their very nature will already have been advertised unsuccessfully, it is envisaged the current immigration rule guidance will be met. However, each case will require to be checked with the Home Office. Further guidance on current immigration rules can be found on the Home Office website at www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

Further Details

8. Further details of the strategy can be obtained by contacting either John Hannah at the Scottish Executive Health Department or Dorothy Armstrong at NHS Education for Scotland. Contact details are available at the front of this circular.