

Dr Navina Evans
Chief Workforce Officer
National Health Service England
22 London Road
London
SE1 6JW

13 July 2022

Dear Navina,

I wanted to take the opportunity to say congratulations on your recent appointment as Chief Workforce Officer for NHS England. On behalf of everyone at [the Recruitment & Employment Confederation](#) (REC), I wish you every success in your new role, at a particularly critical time for the NHS. The REC looks forward to working with you and your team on issues relating to workforce, agencies and frameworks. We are particularly keen to discuss how we can work together to best manage NHS England's spend on agencies and what we have learnt over the pandemic and the recovery about framework operation, and how this can be improved to deliver better patient care and meet our future staffing challenges.

By way of introduction, the REC's membership, made up of over 3,000 businesses, almost 500 health and social care specialist agency including the ten biggest staff suppliers to the NHS). Our healthcare members provide clinical and non-clinical professionals to the NHS and local authorities, as well as to the private sector, supplying valuable permanent, international and flexible workers across all bands and services. Across the UK and all sectors of the economy, our members place someone into a new permanent role every 21 seconds, and just under one million people into temporary assignments every day, helping those who need or choose to work in a more flexible way – a significant and increasing trend in health and social care, even before the pandemic.

Temporary workers are a critical part of the NHS, and many agency staff make a conscious career choice to work via an agency full-time. There are a number of reasons for this but the number one factor is the flexibility this pattern of employment offers, enabling people to choose their own shifts and fulfil other commitments. This is something which is still difficult to achieve for substantive NHS staff on the frontline but an issue we know increasingly matters to them, and other employees for that matter. As has often been acknowledged by NHSE/I, NHS Employers and others, contingent labour and staffing solutions will always be needed within the NHS - whether that is through an agency, a bank, an insourcing supplier, or any other model. Temporary workers fill 15,000 NHS vacancies every quarter, equivalent to five million hours of shifts every month. According to NHS Professionals, three in four nursing vacancies are filled by agency workers.



REC

Recruitment
& Employment
Confederation

The REC's healthcare membership is spread across England, covers all disciplines and includes agencies of all size. This provides the REC with a national and regional oversight of the NHS agency workforce, and we are keen to share this with you. Together, we would like to help you look at long-term, sustainable solutions on issues like staff shortages in the NHS and workforce planning. I enclose a further briefing document to outline who we are, what we do and how we can take a collaborative approach towards long-term workforce planning.

There is so much for us to work on together. I would welcome the opportunity to explore these important issues with you in more detail. Ellie Goddard (ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com) in my office will be happy to arrange a meeting at a mutually convenient time.

Yours Sincerely,

Kate Shoesmith
Deputy Chief Executive