

How to access funding to recruit overseas GPs

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The NHS in England is tackling the severe GP workforce crisis through a number of schemes, including an initiative to recruit at least 2,000 suitably qualified overseas doctors into GP practices by 2020.

So far the [international GP recruitment](#) campaign – which has included adverts aimed at GPs in Australia inviting them to live in the ‘land of Harry Potter and William Shakespeare’ – has not yielded spectacular results.

Nonetheless, funding is available for practices that wish to tempt overseas recruits to their area, as part of the additional £2.4 billion a year NHS England has been investing into general practice through the 2016 GP Forward View.

This article outlines how practices can potentially access funding for recruitment of international recruits.

Principles of international recruitment

The principles underpinning NHS England’s international recruitment programme are:

- The NHS will target those countries where there is likely to be the best chance of recruiting GPs to work in England.
- The NHS will look to attract UK-trained doctors back to the UK wherever possible and UK-trained doctors will not be disadvantaged as a result.
- GPs will need to meet the highest standards of practice and speak good English.

Following international recruitment pilots in Essex, Cumbria and Humber, the approach has now been expanded into other areas across England.

Although no specific funding figure has been allocated to overseas recruitment specifically, there are some key funding streams that practices and other GP organisations can try to access:

- For increasing the workforce, NHS England and Health Education England (HEE) have set ambitious targets to expand the workforce, backed with an extra £206 million as part of the Sustainability and Transformation package.
- Targeted £20,000 bursaries are available in the areas that have found it hardest to recruit into GP training.
- Targeted financial incentives have been set up to return to work in areas of greatest need.
- 250 new post-certificate of completion of training (CCT) fellowships are providing further training opportunities in areas of poorest GP recruitment.

- Return to work routes have been simplified, including a new portfolio route, along with measures to shorten the process.

Which countries is the NHS in England recruiting from?

The programme is targeting countries in the EEA (European Economic Area) and Australia.

Specifically this includes: Australia; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Croatia; Republic of Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland.

Who to contact about funding

Contact your own CCG, Federation and STP board to see if any money has been earmarked locally for international recruitment – if not and you have contacts and know of international doctors wishing to relocate, make a case for financial help to recruit.

Contact your [regional NHS England team](#), HEE and your local Deanery to enquire how to make a bid for funds out of the £206 million allocated for workforce.

Contact [HEE regarding bursaries](#).

What to include in any potential bid

Once you have more of an idea about what local funding is available, you need to think about what to include in your bid.

- Good bids would include how the money would be used. Make a case for your area being an ‘area of need’ and for relocation expenses. Have detailed plans on how this can increase and sustain the local GP workforce.
- To make your case emphasise, for example: if your FTE GPs per patient population are below average; practice closures in your area; that yours is an area of sociodemographic deprivation; where GPs have retired or are coming up to retirement; and local GP surgeries are relying on transient or locum GPs. Addressing all these areas will help strengthen your case that bringing international GPs is a priority to enable safe and effective primary care in the area.
- There may be pre-existing contacts (for example, academic) between areas of England recruiting and some of the countries mentioned – try to capitalise on these. To find this out contact your local academic department of primary care and ask if they have existing links such as research fellowships for GPs from other countries and if they would be interested in collaborating in terms of GP workforce – providing joint academic and clinical GP placements. Arrange a meeting with a contact at the academic department to discuss.
- Contact overseas doctors directly especially if you have an idea they may be interested in working in the NHS. Your bid will be stronger if you already have a list of named doctors or international organisations keen to be involved.
- Link it in with ongoing GP training, CPD and career development
- Link in with someone experience in writing good bids and business cases whether from your practice, federation, network or CCG.

Advertising to international recruits

Adverts for international GPs in the international medical press may be viewed overseas.

NHS England has produced some targeted brochures aimed at international recruits.

It may be possible to bid for money to pay for a targeted advertising campaign for your particular region, emphasising the benefits of living there as well as important aspects of the job. The funds could then be used to design and promote the job adverts and other possible costs involved. Done well, this strategy may be the single most effective way of generating interest for overseas GPs to come and work in England.

Guide URL:

<http://preview.pulse-intelligence.co.uk/guide/how-to-access-funding-to-recruit-overseas-gps/>

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