

Tackling The Retention Crisis Facing **The NHS**

With leavers outnumbering joiners at an alarming rate, the **NHS** faces an unprecedented retention crisis, and experts warn that the situation is at risk of becoming a national emergency given the rising demands on its stretched resources.



Specialists in employee retention for over 15 years, great{with}talent has worked closely with a number of NHS Trusts to tackle the issue head on, providing insight into why employees are actually leaving and identifying actionable solutions to combat rising turnover.

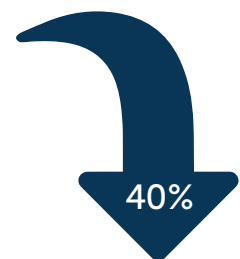
We'd like to share the outcome of our work with the West London NHS Trust, and how, in a relatively short space of time we have helped them to reduce early leavers (0-2 years' service) by 40%, reduce the number of employees at risk of leaving by 37.5%, and actually raise overall employee engagement scores of new starters by nearly 50%.



37.5% reduction in number of employees at risk of leaving.



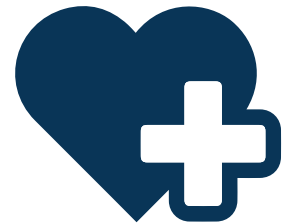
Nearly 50% rise in new employee engagement scores.



40% reduction in those leaving under two years of service.

The NHS - A National Institution

As the UK's largest employer, the NHS employs roughly 1.5 million people in the UK and is the one of the top ten largest employers in the world. For most healthcare professionals, the decision to join the NHS is both vocational – driven out of a passion for the job – and long term.



There are a number of key factors which make the NHS an attractive career option:

- 1. Opportunities for learning/development:** there are clear progression channels and a wide variety of specialisms and development opportunities, either through vertical promotion lines or via sideways moves that provide learning experiences. The organisation has a clear and transparent structure which encourages career advancement and length of service.
- 2. The nature of the work itself:** The NHS offers job opportunities and experiences which simply don't exist elsewhere, for example Accident & Emergency roles, work in high dependency units and maternity wards which either don't exist or are very limited in the private medical sector.
- 3. The NHS is a huge local employer** with entrenched links to the local community – from staff to patients and their families. Hospitals and surgeries are central to communities and provide vital job opportunities to local people in a variety of medical and non-medical positions.
- 4.** There is evidence that prior to joining the NHS, **new starters have a sense of longevity**, that they may well spend the rest of their career at the NHS, demonstrating a 'job for life' aspiration that is absent in most other sectors.
- 5. Experience at the NHS bolsters employees' CVs** and enhances career prospects, providing credibility thanks to high standards of training and practice that are internationally renowned.

In spite of this, the pressures of the job are taking their toll on highly trained, skilled and valued professionals, many of whom are voting with their feet.

Case Study: **Mary Trevelyan's Story***



The Dream: Make a difference
Help people
When I graduated I was so excited

The Reality: Stressed
Run down
Too much pressure

The Outcome:

"I want to work in the NHS, it's such a brilliant thing, [but] I don't think I can".
Mary left the NHS just two and a half years after graduating, after a period of time off resulting from work related stress.

*Mary Trevelyan is just one of the many nurses who has left the NHS due to its rising pressures. Her story was documented by BBC Health Correspondent, Nick Triggle in an article published in January 2018.

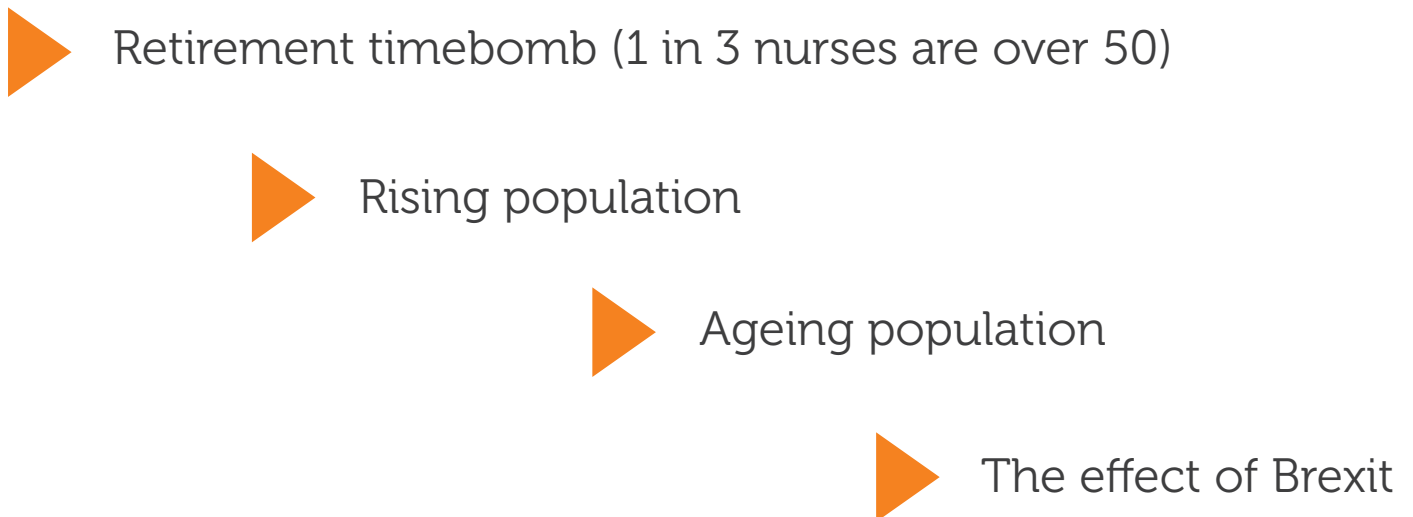
What the Statistics tell us

- +** 1 in 10 nurses are leaving the NHS every year.
- +** 11.8% nurse posts and 9.3% doctor posts are unfilled. A total of 9.2% overall.
- +** There are more leavers than joiners
- +** The number of nurses leaving the NHS would be enough to staff 20 average sized hospital trusts
- +** Over 50% of nurses leaving last year were under 40 yrs old.
- +** The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) reports a shortage of 20,000 nurses, while the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) reports a shortage of 3,500 midwives.
- +** The Brexit effect: 13% of UK nurses come from overseas. However, since the EU referendum, there has been an 89% drop in the number of nurses and midwives coming to the UK.

How Can **The NHS** Survive?

According to Janet Davies, Head of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), **“The NHS is in a dangerous and downward spiral ... [and is] haemorrhaging nurses.”**

Meanwhile, while resources are diminishing, pressures on the service provided by the NHS continue to increase:



The RCN comments that **“there needs to be recognition of the fact that people are the NHS’ greatest resource, and that investment in workforce will have a positive impact for patients, as well as seeing improvements in areas like sickness rates and retention”**.

Whilst the government tackles the situation at the point of recruitment (it has increased the number of training places for doctors, nurses and midwives by 25% over the coming years), it will be three years before trainee nurses graduate. Recognising the immediate imperative to focus on analysing retention as well, the regulator, NHS Improvement, is rolling out a retention programme to help the health service decrease the number of leavers. But the whole picture must be reviewed; **why people join, why they stay, and why they leave**. The health service will only be able to ensure it has enough trained and motivated staff by tackling all three issues together.

Analysis, Insight, & Improvement

How great{with}talent Made An Impact

The West London NHS Trust in particular has taken the bull by the horns. Keen to get to the heart of each of these three key areas, and with a determination not only to establish the triggers for rising turnover but also to identify and implement solutions, they reached out to great{with}talent for expert help. Our pilot study with the Trust not only resulted in **valuable insight into why people join**, stay and leave the Trust, but crucially gave rise to actionable solutions with immediate and significant impact on key metrics such as tenure, engagement, retention and turnover.

Why They Join

On behalf of the West London NHS Trust, we conducted a free pilot study into 'why people join', focussing on what attracts candidates in the first place, their pre-joining expectations, their induction, and if the Trust set them up to succeed (quickly). Our work with the Trust showed that people typically cite **career progression** and **personal growth** as the key reasons to join.

Of the new hires in pilot only just over half were enjoying the work, motivated and intending to stay. Following our work with the Trust, **this figure rose to 75%**. As a result of the data, insight and recommendations collected and implemented during our pilot, the Trust saw satisfaction ratings for the overall recruitment experience increase from **82% to 96% (an uplift of 17%)**.



More specifically, **89% said they would recommend the Trust as a place to work**, citing their onboarding experience as 'excellent' or 'good' (compared with 73% before the pilot). Data compares favourably in other areas too; **93%** of new joiners said they were proud to work for the Trust, up **15%** on pre-intervention scores. Notably, these 'proud' scores rate far higher than in the private sector.

During the pilot study, **great{with}talent** identified that new starters did not understand the Trust's history and were not aware of key benefits such as gym membership. In direct and immediate response to our recommendations, the Trust created and launched an employee handbook providing full information on the employment experience, including information on the background and context of the West London NHS Trust and the employee benefits on offer. This is just one example of how we helped them to turn data and insight into action, with significant positive impact at employee and employer level.

Why They Stay

Understanding why people join (and their experience through that process) and why people leave makes absolute sense. However, this is too passive an approach. West London NHS Trust realised that they needed to establish how to re-connect with those 'at-risk' of resignation and understand what makes people stay. **great{with}talent** worked closely with the Trust to identify the key potential triggers for those at risk of resignation.

Top 3 'at-risk' turnover factors (pre-intervention):

1. Pay & benefits: 40%
2. Potential for progression: 40%
3. Training and development opportunities: 28%

Our findings pointed clearly to the need for the Trust to develop and launch a range of targeted solutions designed to communicate the volume and frequency of promotions and communicate appropriate training options for newly promoted employees. Most strikingly, the number of people citing concerns about 'potential for progression' reduced from 40% to 29%, and 'training and development' transitioned from one of the top 3 at-risk turnover factors, to the top engagement driver, at 74%.

Our analysis also helped the Trust to identify the profile of people who stay longer, and to tailor recruitment messaging, conversations and decisions accordingly.

Top 5 reasons for staying within the West London NHS Trust (post-intervention):

1. Training & Development Opportunities: 74%
2. The nature of the work itself: 68%
3. Progression opportunities: 64%
4. Relationships with colleagues (team culture): 62%
5. What we do as an organisation (beliefs, shared values): 47%

Overall, in just one quarter following our pilot scheme, their engagement score reached 75% (an uplift of 39%) and, the insight, advice and recommendations derived from our analysis resulted in a 37.5% downturn of those at risk of leaving.

Why They Leave

Every employer must accept that everyone leaves! But establishing the trigger points for resignation is key, in order to identify and prevent unnecessary and regretted turnover and extend tenure. In fact, our study showed that, in this case, half of those leaving the West London NHS Trust were doing so for reasons connected to their personal life.

We call this 'unavoidable turnover', since their resignation does not indicate dissatisfaction with the job or the organisation. In fact, evidence supports the fact that leavers of this Trust typically get on well with their line managers, and, furthermore, the Trust has a much higher percentage of unavoidable turnover (leavers who are happy with the organisation and job) than the private sector.

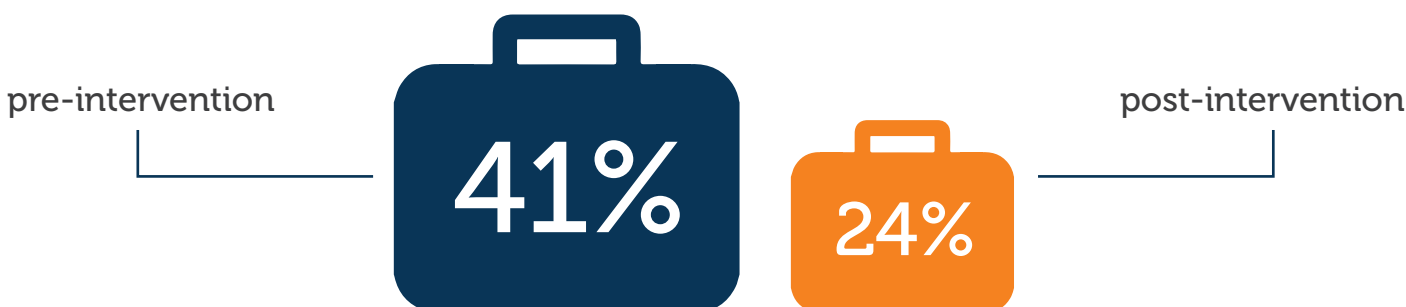
Top 3 reasons for leaving the Trust (pre-intervention):

1. Personal growth 31%
2. Career progression 29%
3. Loyalty & trust 21%

Despite career progression and personal growth topping the list as key reasons to join, data gathered in our study clearly tells us that where these are not living up to expectations they are also the key drivers of resignation. Evidence was clear that a high percentage of those that leave do so in the first 2 years of service, further indicating that the reality of their experience does not match their expectations. Data from our study at the West London NHS Trust shows that **41%** of new starters left within 2 years (yet only **25%** had intended to do that). Individual case studies point to work overload, high stress levels, poor work-life balance and a sense of relentlessness with little recognition.

Based on this insight, **great{with}talent** made practical recommendations which, following implementation led to a significant shift in retention. Happily, post-intervention, only **24%** left within 2 years (in line with their intentions).

New starters leaving within 2 years



The number of employees planning to stay in the organisation for 6-10 years doubled in the quarter following the study, while those in the 'planning to stay for 3-5 years' category also showed an increase. It is worth noting that the Trust compares favourably with the private sector on planned tenure; with **1 in 3 people** intending to stay for over 10 years.

At the start of our work with the West London NHS Trust, 50% of leavers said they would recommend it as a place to work (compared with a private sector average of 75%). Post-intervention, this figure increased by 34%. Following our pilot, 73% said they would be happy to return to the Trust to work, compared with only 62% when first asked.

How Can great{with}talent Help Your NHS Trust?

Every organisation and every Trust is unique, and we partner closely with each client to pinpoint the resignation triggers and ensure tangible results in the form of improved retention, resulting in reduced costs, increased productivity, and marked uplift in employee morale and engagement.

We are very aware of NHS budgetary challenges, which is exactly why, in the above case, we agreed to conduct the **initial study and feedback on a pro-bono basis to demonstrate the value**. We would like to extend this offer to every NHS organisation without any obligation. It goes without saying that we hope you love working with us, see the value our insight provides and ultimately decide to continue the partnership. But if not we know that the analysis we can provide will help you to address your Trust's challenge of retaining the skilled and fantastic professionals that form your most valuable resource and your greatest asset.

Further information is available on www.greatwithtalent.com, but for a more specific discussion on arranging your pro-bono retention and engagement study, feel free to email us at info@greatwithtalent.com or call us on **0333 012 4649**.

We look forward to working together.