

Layla Moran MP
Chair
Health and Social Care Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Thursday 7 May 2026

Dear Ms Moran,

I write to you on behalf of the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC), the professional body and voice for the UK recruitment industry. We represent over 3,000 recruitment businesses, including over 450 recruitment agencies who supply clinical and non-clinical health and social care professionals to the NHS, as well as to local authorities.

In January 2026, we sent you a letter regarding NHS staffing policy and the reduction in use of agency staff. Since this correspondence, the REC has completed additional analysis of pay rates across NHS Bank and agency staffing at a number of the UK's largest NHS trusts. This new information obtained via FOI requests shows that, in many cases, the most expensive Bank shifts exceed the highest-cost agency shifts. We believe this evidence raises important questions about the assumption that reducing agency usage necessarily delivers better value for money for the NHS as claimed by the [Secretary of State for Health and Social Care](#).

As you will be aware from our previous correspondence, the REC remains deeply concerned by a 'cut now, think later' approach to agency staffing. Despite claims by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) that curbing agency expenditure would generate substantial savings for NHS trusts, available evidence shows this outcome has not been consistently realised in practice. Our data and analysis show that spending on staff via Banks far exceeded the cost of procuring staff via agencies overall during the period 2020–2025, and in some cases by a considerable margin. This was the case across a number of London NHS trusts surveyed via Freedom of Information requests conducted last year and publicised by the REC in January 2026: ['Patient safety taken for granted: Trusts admit failing to assess impact on patients and staff of Department of Health diktat to cut agency staff'](#)

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has encouraged NHS trusts to prioritise Bank staffing over agency provision, while the DHSC has characterised agency costs as a 'rip-off'. However, data obtained this year across multiple NHS trusts shows that, at the shift level, particularly in high-demand or hard-to-fill roles, Bank staffing is frequently more expensive than agency provision. This suggests that costs are driven less by staffing provider and more by urgency, workforce shortages, and shift conditions. Many of the trusts included in this analysis no longer use off-framework agencies following tighter NHS controls. As a result, this comparison reflects the current, policy-compliant system and shows that even within these constraints, Bank staffing is not consistently cheaper.

By way of illustration from the latest FOI data:

- **Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust**, which does not use off-framework agencies. The average cost of the top five most expensive Bank Shifts was £5,723 in 2024-25 and £5,622 in 2025-26. This compares to £4,491 in 2024-25 and £4,642 in 2025-26 for the top five most expensive agency shifts
- In addition, the average cost of the five most expensive Bank shifts in 2025–26 paid by **Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust** London was £5,509, compared with £2,116 for the five most expensive agency shifts. It did not use off framework agencies that year.

- Another example is **Manchester University NHS Trust**. At that trust the average cost of the top five most expensive Bank shifts in 2024 was £2,895 and the average cost of the top five most expensive agency shifts in 2024 was about the same at £2,888. It did not use off framework agencies in those years. And that the total cost of Bank spending in 2024/5 was £114.3 million – nearly double that in 2020/21 (£60.2 million) – while agency staffing spending was £12.1 million in 2024/25 – which is around £2.7 million less than in 2020/1.
- At **Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**, the average cost of the five most expensive shifts was: Bank - £1,365 in 2024/25 and £1,193 in 2025/26; Agency - £372 in 2024/5 and £574.23 in 2025/6. Again, there was no off-framework spend by that trust in these time periods.

We also note that the DHSC's limited understanding of temporary work was highlighted in the National Guardian's Speak Up Review published earlier this year. The report indicates that many temporary NHS workers feel undervalued, unsupported and uncertain about their job security, problems compounded by poor integration and inclusion within teams. The National Guardian's call for the NHS to work more closely with healthcare staffing agencies is therefore particularly welcome. Greater collaboration would support the shared objective of joined-up workforce planning that benefits nurses, doctors and patients alike. This evidence suggests that current policy consequences extend beyond cost control into workforce stability and safety. The continued absence of agency workers from the NHS survey, and therefore from sharing their views on workplace issues, is unhelpful, in our opinion.

Scrutiny by the Committee on this issue is long overdue and could play an important role in bringing greater clarity around value when it comes to NHS staffing procurement. The last Commons inquiry into this issue was opened in 2018, and the policy, workforce and cost context has changed significantly since then. This is particularly urgent given the Health Secretary's stated intention to pursue further legislative measures to end the use of agency staff if anticipated savings are not delivered, an approach which risks being based on incomplete or misleading assumptions. This risks worse value for money and patient impact.

We would welcome the opportunity to support the Committee's scrutiny of this issue by providing further data and evidence, whether through written submission or oral evidence. Given the potential implications for value for taxpayers, workforce stability and patient care. We believe this is an area where timely examination would be particularly valuable. We would be grateful for any guidance on how best to contribute.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how the REC can support your work in this area. Please contact Ellie in my office (ellie.goddard@rec.uk.com) and we would be happy to arrange a meeting at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Carberry
Chief Executive