



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Minister of State for Health*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

020 7210 4850

Kate Shoesmith
Deputy Chief Executive
Recruitment and Employment Confederation

31 August 2022

Dear Kate,

Thank you for your letter.

I want to start by acknowledging the invaluable efforts made by the framework agencies, especially in supporting our healthcare system during what has been an unprecedented and challenging time.

The Long Term Plan sets an aim for NHS providers to reduce their agency staff bills and encourage workers back into substantive and bank roles, as well as improving retention. In July 2021, the UK government confirmed a 3% pay award for 2021/22 for all NHS workers employed under the NHS terms and conditions of service. As you will be aware, an agency worker is not directly employed by the NHS and therefore not entitled to contractual pay uplifts. The NHS pay rates were used as a reference to benchmark the price caps before the launch of the Agency Rules in April 2016.

Total agency spend as a percentage of total wage bill has decreased from 7.9% in 2015/16 to 3.7% in 2020/21. The decrease in total agency spend across the NHS has largely been delivered through a reduction in the proportion of shifts filled by agency staff across all temporary staffing shifts from 28% in 2018/19 to 23% in 2020/21.

NHS England (NHSE) is guided by monthly data submissions, with framework operators prioritising their resources towards organisations reporting the greatest usage of off-framework. 94.3% of agency shifts between 1 April 2021 to 28 February 2022 were fulfilled by framework providers.

During the last calendar year, the NHS workforce has also grown by around 46,000 FTE. Work programmes continuing into 2022/23 include delivering a 50,000 nurse commitment through domestic and international recruitment.

To support long term workforce planning, in July 2021 the Department of Health and Social Care commissioned Health Education England to work with partners and review long term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce. This work (Framework 15) will look at the key drivers of workforce demand and supply over the longer term and will set out how they may impact upon the required shape of the future workforce to help identify the main strategic choices facing us, to develop a shared and explicit set of planning assumptions. This work is nearing its final stages.

Building on this work, the Department for Health and Social Care has commissioned NHS England to develop a long-term workforce plan and will set out the key conclusions of that work in due course.

NHSE will continue to work closely with the framework operators and other stakeholders to not only support the workforce during the recovery phase but also consider the strategic direction of travel. As you identify, the NHS cannot do this alone and I am pleased you want to be part of the journey to ensuring a long-term sustainable NHS workforce.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria'.

**MARIA CAULFIELD MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH**