

To support NHS England's and NHS Improvement's recent publication expecting NHS trusts to continue using approved frameworks, we have provided a quick summary of the advantages of using framework agencies during the current COVID-19 response. This includes an open invitation from the Workforce Alliance to further support you.

### **Why use framework agencies?**

1. Framework agencies are proven to fill shifts in a time of national response.

The Workforce Alliance recently supported University Hospitals Birmingham to source 50 clinical staff that had to be fully compliant, and available for induction training at the NEC on specific dates. Workforce Alliance team members worked over the Easter weekend to support this effort by:

- Identifying suitable agencies from our Management Information
- Using established supplier relationships to liaise with senior representatives from the agencies
- Managing all clarification queries
- Ensuring that rate caps were adhered to
- Issuing confirmation of induction invitations to the agencies for their accepted workers
- Liaising with agencies re: compliance checklist
- Collating evidence relating to worker compliance as required
- Managing post induction queries

2. Framework owners provide assurance that workers placed at your trust have been checked against NHS employment standards

All agencies are required to carry out checks on their candidates to ensure that they have a right to work in the UK and have the correct qualifications and experience to work in NHS clinical environments.

Approved framework owners independently audit their agencies, checking candidate files to assure themselves these checks are taking place. If agencies fail the on-site audit they can be suspended from the framework until remedial actions have taken place.

We provide this assurance, saving NHS trust time verifying this independently.



### 3. Approved framework terms protect your trust against excess charges and hidden costs

Operating under approved framework terms protects your trust against excess transfer fees, extended hire periods and other hidden charges typically found in standard terms of business. It also ensures that all workers are engaged on consistent terms and conditions and Key Performance Indicators, making it easier to manage supplier performance.

### 4. Approved frameworks support NHS Improvement agency rules, helping trusts to adhere to price caps and control expenditure

Approved framework owners support trusts to reduce agency spend and improve price transparency. All framework pricing is fully transparent and aligns to national pay scales, to enable trusts to immediately identify how much of the total charge rate goes to the worker, National Insurance, Working Time Regulations, or agency commission. This is useful for managing market behaviours around inappropriate escalation.

### 5. Approved frameworks facilitate overrides where necessary for patient safety

Under our framework there is no financial incentive for agencies to escalate rates as commission rates remain constant, with only the worker rate being escalated. Any additional money goes straight to the worker.

## Further support

If you would like further information on framework agency capacity in your region, or if your trust would like some support during this time, please contact [enquiries@noecpc.nhs.uk](mailto:enquiries@noecpc.nhs.uk)