

Harnessing Hidden Talent

A best practice guide to helping
IENs working in unskilled roles
gain their registration



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Introduction

“We focus a lot on recruiting from overseas when we already have IENs with a wealth of knowledge and

Karen Mechen, Practice Development Matron, Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

IENs turn to the HCA role when, for one reason or another, they find it difficult to register with the NMC at the appropriate level. Take Aruna. A qualified nurse in India with a BSc Hons from Jaipur National University, Aruna has been working as an HCA in an NHS Trust since 2014. After working in intensive care in India for five years, she gave up her post to come to the UK with her husband’s job. In order to start working as quickly as possible, Aruna took an HCA role in her local hospital but with long hours and family commitments at home and in India, she never found time to take the steps required to register as a nurse – to use her training, skills and experience to the full.

In NHS Trusts in England there are an estimated 3000¹ staff like Aruna. Loyal, hardworking employees dedicated to their patients, but whose nursing talent lies hidden and underutilised in their current roles. *Harnessing Hidden Talent* offers them a helping hand. A practical toolkit to help you to help them realise their full potential.

The resource is based on the experiences of Clinical Educators who have successfully implemented an upskilling programme: filling nursing vacancies from within and providing professional development opportunities aligned with diversity and BAME workforce

skills working in our Trust. **Why aren’t we using that expertise and developing those staff?”**

goals. It offers information, advice, checklists and case examples to help you develop an action plan, whether you’re interested in initiating a formal upskilling programme or looking to nurture IENs on an individual basis.

We hope you find this guide helpful.

The OET team

Thank you to our contributors

OET would like to thank the following contributors whose advice and support has been invaluable in creating this toolkit: Devon Marsh, Senior Clinical Educator, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust; Karen Mechen, Practice Development Matron, Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (HUTH); Dr Lyn Middleton, Deputy Head of Nursing Education, Development and Regulation, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board; Lisa Punter, Lead Nurse Workforce, Ashford and St Peter’s Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; Bjorn Ramirez, Medical Matron, Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust; Peter Rodway, Specialist Language Courses.

Guide to abbreviations

IEN – Internationally-Educated Nurse

HCSW – Healthcare Support Worker

EL – English language

OTN – Overseas trained nurse

¹Davis D, Agimol P. The need to capture the unharnessed expertise of overseas educated nurses working as care support workers in their host country. *Journal of Nursing Management*, July 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13410>. Accessed 21 March, 2022

Why This Approach

Meeting short and long-term workforce goals requires effort across a range of levers. An IEN upskilling initiative can provide a valuable complement to more mainstream recruitment paths. **Here's why.**



2.1 RATIONALE

Can help reduce nurse vacancies

With the number of nurse vacancies reaching 39,000² in mid-2021, it's not news that staffing is at crisis point. An IEN training programme can provide an efficient and cost-effective way to fill vacancies when used alongside other recruitment strategies. **“For one of the wards I handle, we had two HCAs who upskilled to RNs, which filled around 20% of the RN vacancies at the time”.** Bjorn Ramirez, Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS FT

Contributes to meeting wider strategic objectives

Developing this talent pool can help you meet your Trust's other strategic objectives. For example, it could align with a commitment to supporting lifelong learning for employees or creating specific pathways for international staff to pursue personal and professional development. It can contribute to policies related to the experience of black and minority ethnic staff, workforce diversity and equal opportunities.

Removes some of the challenges associated with new hires

Recent studies into the characteristics of overseas nurses working in unskilled roles suggest there is added value in developing this segment of the workforce. In a survey of 857 overseas nurses working in unskilled roles in Salford, 629 were found to be British citizens and 79% had been living in the UK for more than 10 years³. By focusing on domiciled staff, costs and issues associated with overseas recruitment (immigration, visas, cultural assimilation and communication) are reduced. In addition, research by the Nuffield Trust⁴ showed that nurses from the rest of the world appear to stay longer, on average, in NHS hospital and community settings than UK nationals and have higher levels of participation. Investment in their training rewards their loyalty into the long term.

Things to consider



What is the size of this populace in your Trust?



How does it compare to the number of nurse vacancies in your Trust right now?



Would an upskilling initiative be congruent with other workforce commitments in your Trust? Which strategies in particular?



Does your experience of IENS working in unskilled roles match the research findings?

² Nuffield Trust. Recruitment of nurses from overseas. October 2021.

⁴ Nuffield Trust. Return on investment of overseas nurse recruitment: lessons for the NHS. October 2021.

³ Davis D, Agimol P. The need to capture the unharnessed expertise of overseas educated nurses working as care support workers in their host country. Journal of Nursing Management, July 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.13410>. Accessed 21 March, 2022

HEE OTN Strand C Funding

In 2020, HEE and NHSEI announced a tranche of funding to invest in IEN upskilling known as the Strand C Overseas-Trained Nurse (OTN) programme. The funding was to pay for English language examination fees and training programmes.

84 Trusts were provided with £650 per HCSW to provide English language training and/or examination preparation to support attainment of the NMC's English language proficiency requirements.

So far, the programme has resulted in 280 IENs passing their English and moving one-step closer to their goal of becoming a registered nurse.

NHS EI and DHSC is currently looking at how the programme could be extended in future.

NHS England and NHS Improvement



The Financials

Comparative costs of different recruitment paths

An analysis of comparative costs has shown this recruitment pathway to provide a cost-effective model for filling nurse vacancies. While the numbers of potential recruits may not be enough to replace mainstream recruitment channels, it can offer a viable add-on that may reduce reliance on more expensive alternatives.

Recruitment Path	Cost per nurse
Overseas recruits	£10,00-£12,000 ⁵
Domestic graduates	£26,000+ ⁵
Agency/Bank	£10,000-£12,000 after 24 months ⁵
IEN upskilling	English language £4,470 – current cost per pass ⁶ (includes English language test fees and preparation) NMC registration fees £1170 (includes evaluation and registration fees and the cost of the CBT and OSCE. These costs could be higher if candidates need to re-sit tests)
Summary: Funding of high-quality upskilling programmes offers value-for-money, particularly when provided to candidates with higher baseline English proficiency.	

⁵ Nuffield Trust. Return on investment of overseas nurse recruitment: lessons for the NHS. October 2021

⁶ Health Education England Directorate of Global Health partnerships. English language Programme Oral Presentation. NMC English language Roundtable. November 2021.



The Pathway To Registration

What are the steps required for an IEN working as an HCA to upgrade to Band 4 or 5?








Pathway to Band 4 or 5

(reproduced with kind permission of Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust)

Criteria for completion		Average time allocated to complete	Cumulative timescale	8/9 months* *For more on the English language component see pages X-X
Recruitment process	Interview, confirmation of visa and passport	4 weeks	4 weeks	
Conditional offer of place on the programme	Subject to health declaration, character reference and DBS	2 weeks	6 weeks	
NMC Requirements for Overseas Trained Nurses				
NMC Online Application	To be completed as part of recruitment offer	2 weeks	8 weeks	
English Language OET or IELTS	Book, prepare and sit exams	12 weeks*	20 weeks*	
Test of Competence: CBT	Book, prepare and sit exams	4 weeks	24 weeks	
Test of Competence: OSCE	Book, prepare and sit exams	8 weeks	32 weeks	
Join the NMC Register Let's get started!		2 weeks induction	34 weeks	

How long will it take?

This timeline is a rough estimate and subject to many variables, for example:

-  Candidate's ability and confidence with exams
-  How many pass attempts you allow
-  How many supernumerary days you can offer for study/practice
-  Flexibility to offer rotations to assist with OSCE prep
-  Candidate's self motivation and opportunity to work at home/self-study

Band 4 Nursing Associate is also an option

"We had some IENs who had attained their nursing degree in their home country but hadn't passed the post-qualification exam needed to gain their license to practice. Unfortunately, this means their qualification can't be recognised to Band 5, however Band 4 Nursing Associate is an attractive alternative option, and we have a number of IENs using their degree to pursue this route".

Karen Mechen
Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

The Process

The Business Case

You've decided to adopt this approach in your Trust. You believe you have some excellent IEN HCAs who could progress to make caring and diligent nurses. If you're thinking of implementing a formal programme, you may need to present a business case to managers and governors outlining the proposal, costs and projected outcomes and benefits.

Essential checklist for your business case

Who are you addressing it to?

What are you expecting them to do as a result?

About the programme:

- What the programme is
- Owners
- Rationale
- Objectives/Goals
- Timeframe
- Expected outcomes
- Financials/Budget required]
- Opportunity cost
- Requirements on existing staff

How will you measure success?

Next actions

Who Pays?

Trusts adopt a variety of funding models according to available budgets and the extent of their programme. Most Trusts provide funding for all exam fees. Policies vary across Trusts regarding payment for NMC registration fees, exam preparation costs, and expenses. For a breakdown of liable costs please see page X.

Payment models include:

- The Trust pays upfront
- The Nurse pays upfront, and the Trust reimburses
- The Nurse self-funds partially or entirely

For reimbursement models, consider including a contract clause, for example payment may be subject to the nurse passing all exams and completing their registration. Or you may include a requirement to pay a percentage back if a nurse leaves within a set period of time. If your Trust is paying for exam fees, be clear how many attempts you will pay for. Hull University Teaching Hospitals, for example, pays for three attempts.

Be sure to take advantage of national funding programmes like the Strand C OTN initiative (see page X) and talk to your providers about bulk booking discounts. Setting suppliers up on your finance systems in advance can save time and energy down the line.

Good practice example

"We reimburse them for the costs that they've incurred because we understand the hardship and the difficulty when they're supporting their families as well they actually need that financial help".

Dr. Carolyn Middleton
Associate Director of Nursing, Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board (2019)

Management and Ownership

It is important to identify the programme leads, those responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating the programme. They must be prepared to push it through, answer questions, evaluate and adjust based on learnings. Things to consider:

Who are the stakeholders in your programme?

- The candidates
- Ward/Clinical Area Managers employing candidates
- Finance
- HR and Workforce lead
- English exam providers
- English preparation providers
- Clinical Education and Practice Training staff



Defining the Offer

Best Practice Checklist

What will you include in your upskilling programme? Here are some prompt points to assist you with putting together a plan.

Eligibility

- Is it just for internal staff or will you advertise outside as well?
- If internal, will candidates be required to have a minimum number of years of continuous service?
- What personal characteristics would be desirable? (See page X)
- What professional skills will be desirable
- What qualifications do you expect them to have?

Financials

- What will the Trust pay for e.g. NMC registration fees, EL prep?
- What costs will be carried by the candidate e.g. travel expenses?
- Will the nurse pay and be reimbursed?
- Will the Trust pay upfront?
- How many rounds of tests will be funded e.g. two attempts

Programme content

- How long will your programme be – 6-8 months or more/less?
- What will be the start date?
- **What will be included:**
 - Assistance with NMC applications?
 - Support with English test preparation?
 - Support with CBT and OSCE preparation?
 - Guarantee of a Band 5 role for successful candidates?

Day to Day management

- Who is the candidate accountable to?
- Will you offer study leave for OET/IELTS or CBT?
- Will they remain in their existing clinical area while on the programme?
- Will rotation be an option to prepare necessary skills for OSCE?
- Will they be supernumerary?
- Are they on the roster?
- What shift patterns do they work?

Exam support (OSCE/CBT)

- What resources can you offer e.g. library access, knowledge services
- How will you help candidates prepare for OSCE
- Placements in different areas while training for OSCE
- How many attempts will you allow at each exam

Exam support - English requirement

- Will you expect applicants to have OET or IELTS prior to joining the programme?
- Will you provide English language exam support as part of your programme?
- Will you fund English language preparation?
- Will you fund the English language examination fees?
- Will you select candidates by their English ability?
- Will you coordinate English preparation or let the students go it alone?

After registration

- Notice period from existing post
- Where will they work once registered?

Think about...

What could you put in place to ensure candidate commitment to the organisation to rationalise the initial cost pressure of supporting IENs

Candidate Selection

The pathway to Band 5 can be a rocky one with twists and turns to navigate and setbacks along the way. Not all HCAs will be willing or able to make it through. It is important to select candidates for their ambition, ability and staying power and to be upfront with them about the commitment it entails.

“Candidates might not understand how difficult it might be to give their own time to the study, pass OET etc. They have the passion, but the reality might be different as it’s such hard work.”

Karen Mechen
Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

How will you select candidates?

- Ask ward managers and supervisors for personal recommendations
- Advertise through local channels promoting the opportunity
- Advertise externally



Case example

“When we began our programme, we ran an advertising campaign on Facebook. We found the majority of applications were IENs working as HCAs in local nursing homes. Going forward we are planning to focus more on internal candidates to demonstrate our commitment to them and to acknowledge and reward their contribution”.

Karen Mechen
Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

What makes a good candidate?

Qualifications and documentation

- Do they meet the academic criteria set out by the NMC? <https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/register-nursing-associate/outside-england/eligibility-and-qualification-evaluation/>
- Do they have a health declaration, character reference and DBS?
- Do they have an NMC Decision letter?
- Do they have to have their OET or IELTS?
- Do they have proof of citizenship: Visa confirmation, passport, ID card?

Professional experience

- Length of service as a nurse in their home country
- Any nursing specialisms or management experience gained
- Length of service as an HCA in the UK
- Any extra responsibilities undertaken
- Have they applied for transfers, promotions before?
- Do they understand the scope of the RN role?

Personal characteristics

Other requirements may include: motivated, good role model, professional, flexible, Trust values, reliability, history of safe practice, team player.

Candidate Selection English Language

The English language requirements of the NMC can be challenging. While an IEN may appear to have really good English, proficiency in everyday communication and attaining the required grades in a formal, high-stakes English language examination are very different things. Expectation management is important.

How to assess current language levels

The use of placement tests is strongly advised to assess a candidate’s current language level. Placement tests will help you evaluate how many hours candidates need to study and where students can learn together. Your English language training provider can advise you on the placement tests available.

Assessing commitment and motivation

Ensure all potential participants know what passing their English involves - the number of tutored hours, the homework commitments, and the levels of language they need to achieve. Achieving the OET grades required by the NMC is challenging. The level of language is high, and students need to learn exam techniques and strategies as well as understand what the marking criteria are.



Is the candidate ready to pass their English?

There are a number of ways to evaluate whether an individual is ready to pass their English exam.

- Have they taken OET or IELTS in the past and what was the outcome?
- Do they have any other formal English qualifications?
- What was their highest level of academic attainment in school/college?
- What is their length of time away from study?
- How much time do they have available now for study/exam prep?
- How will this impact on their work commitments and home life?
- Are they ambitious, self-motivated and committed to the goal?
- MOST IMPORTANTLY: What is their current language level?

OET Pulse



OET Pulse is the only placement test specifically for healthcare professionals. It gives an immediate assessment of a candidate's English level and provides feedback on how to prepare for OET based on that score.

- Takes around 30 minutes
- Any device, anytime, anywhere
- Test scenarios are healthcare specific
- Assesses reading and listening skills as well as language knowledge
- Results expressed according to the CEFR scale (SEE PAGE X)

<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/shop/oet-pulse/>

Check the health of your English

Good practice examples

“The key things if you're launching a programme are to ensure that you do some testing upfront so that you get the right candidates. It has to be somebody with a reasonable level of English as a starting point and to work with a company that would be able to provide the language training expertise”

Dr. Carolyn Middleton, Associate Director of Nursing, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (2019)

“All of our candidates benefited from taking the baseline assessment through SLC, which then helped us work out the hours each needed and match the groups accordingly. Ours was a small group in the end but this wouldn't have worked if everyone had been at different levels”.

**Lisa Punter
Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust**

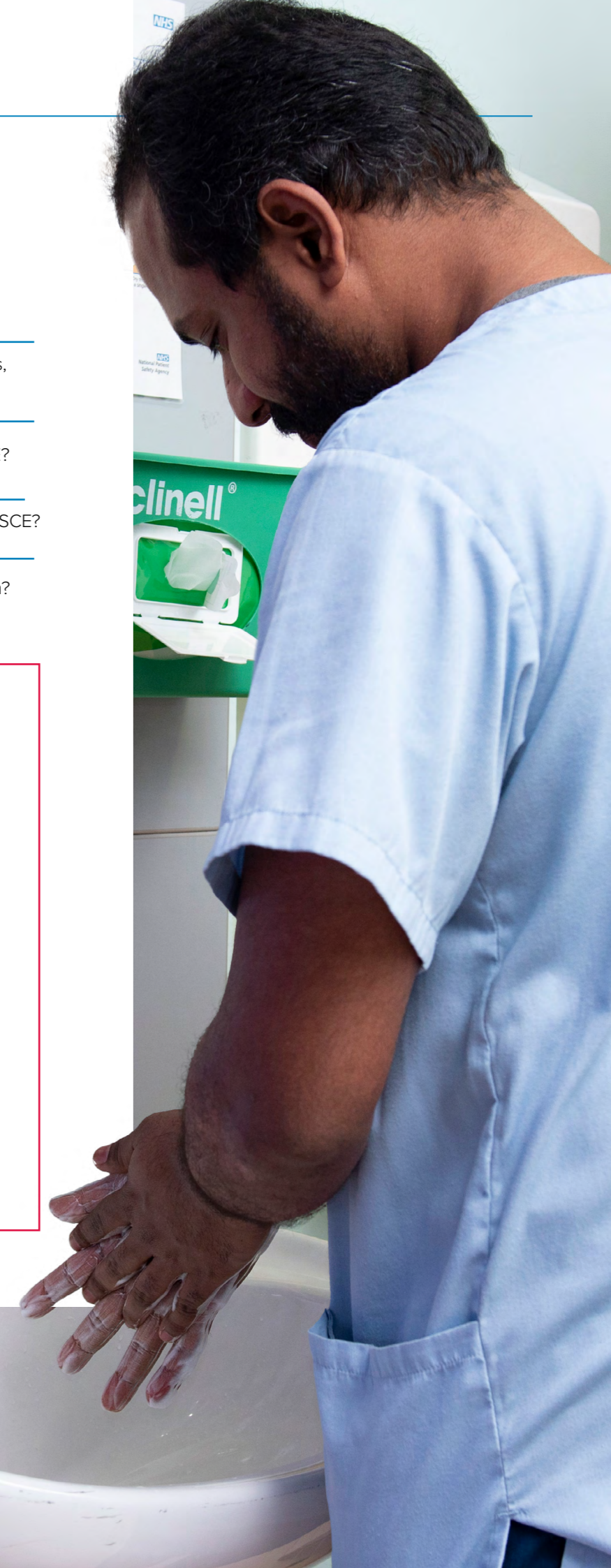
Exam support (OSCE/CBT)

- What resources can you offer e.g. library access, knowledge services?
- How will you help candidates prepare for OSCE?
- Placements in different areas while training for OSCE?
- How many attempts will you allow at each exam?

Good practice example

“Initially, we had nearly 30 expressions of interest. Some people seemed to think OET was going to be an “easy” route to meet the language requirements, so once they learnt it was the same standards and scores (as IELTS) and would take a lot of commitment from them, they didn't want to pursue it. I then referred 17 people for assessment - more people dropped out after that for various reasons - some decided the level of self-directed learning was not going to fit in with their work/ life balance. This all meant that those that did the course were really committed and understood the expectations”.

**Lisa Punter
Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust**



Meeting the English Requirement

Choosing a test venue

In the UK, EL exams have to be taken in a secure test venue under strict exam conditions. Exam security is critical to a high-stakes exams like OET that open the door to greater life opportunities for their holders.

See here for a list of OET Test Venues in the UK:
<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/book-oet/>

Choosing a test venue. What to consider:

- Test type – on computer and/or on paper?
- Available dates and times for the exam
- Distance – will it require an overnight stay?
- Travel arrangements: parking, public transport access
- Existing relationship with venue and staff?
- Covid secure arrangements
- Capacity: how many candidates can it accommodate?
- Could the test venue come to you? Read about Bucks Healthcare's in-house OET venue:
<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org//oet-in-house/>

Which test to take? OET or IELTS?

The NMC recognises two English language tests as proof of attainment for registration purposes: OET and IELTS⁷.

Evidence shows that most candidates opt for OET when given the choice and that OET also achieves stronger pass rates at the required NMC EI proficiency level than IELTS⁷.

These outcomes can partly be attributed to the healthcare context of OET. OET is the only English language test specifically for healthcare professionals. Candidates' English is tested in the context of familiar workplace scenarios such as explaining a medical procedure or writing a referral letter. Comfort with the context builds confidence for the test and provides practical learning outcomes for use in their real work.

67% of UK-based candidates opt for OET when given the choice

On paper or on computer?

Candidates may opt to take OET on paper or on computer. The test is exactly the same whichever test type is chosen. The choice is down to candidate preference and also to availability. Note: not all test venues offer both OET on paper and OET on computer.

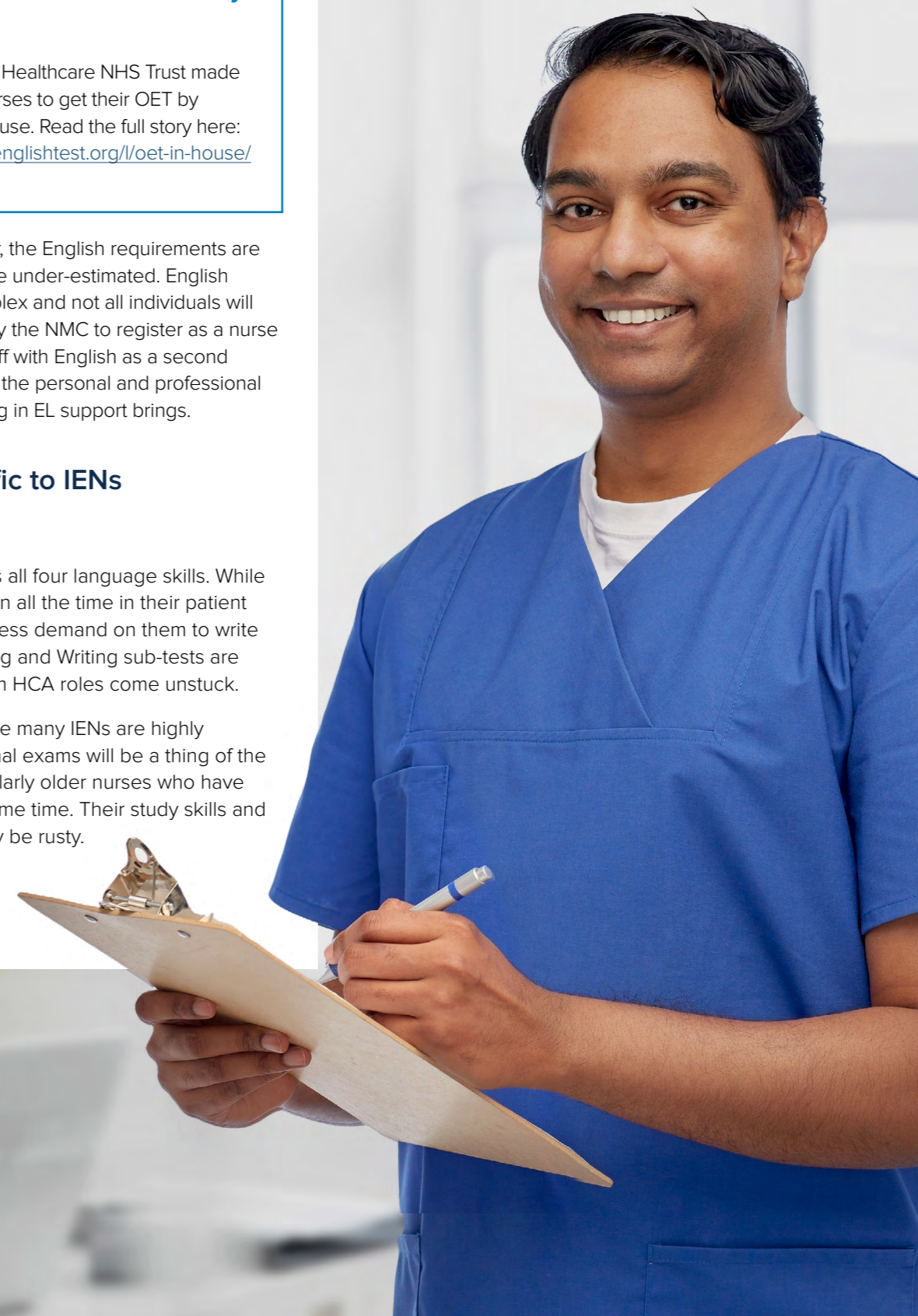
OET In-House. Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust trials new way of taking OET.

In 2020, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust made it possible for overseas nurses to get their OET by creating a test venue in house. Read the full story here:
<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org//oet-in-house/>

Whichever test you opt for, the English requirements are rigorous and should not be under-estimated. English language learning is complex and not all individuals will reach the level required by the NMC to register as a nurse in the UK. However, all staff with English as a second language will benefit from the personal and professional development that investing in EL support brings.

Challenges specific to IENs working as HCAs

- English exams assess all four language skills. While HCAs speak and listen all the time in their patient interactions, there is less demand on them to write and read. The Reading and Writing sub-tests are often where IENs from HCA roles come unstuck.
- Exam technique. While many IENs are highly educated, sitting formal exams will be a thing of the past for many, particularly older nurses who have been in the UK for some time. Their study skills and exam techniques may be rusty.



⁷ Health Education England Directorate of Global Health partnerships. English language Programme Oral Presentation. NMC English language Roundtable. November 2021

All staff with English as a second language will benefit from the personal and professional development that investing in English language support brings.

How long will it take to pass?

EL specialists suggest on average it takes 100hrs of face-to-face teaching from a Premium Preparation Provider (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/preparation-providers>) to move 50 points in OET or equivalent (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/results-assessment/>), plus an equal amount of independent study/practice i.e. 200 study hours.

It is generally accepted that improvement at the higher levels takes longer than improvement at the lower levels (language learning progress is not linear). Improvement at the higher levels also requires teaching by higher skilled teachers.

Understanding language levels

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international standard for describing language ability. OET and IELTS exam results are mapped against the CEFR which uses the following six-point scale.

- **A1** Beginner
- **A2** Elementary
- **B1** Intermediate
- **B2** Mid Intermediate
- **B2+** Upper intermediate (NMC required level for Writing – OET C+/IELTS 6.5)
- **C1** Advanced (NMC required level for Reading, Speaking, Listening - OET B/IELTS 7.0-7.5)
- **C2** Proficiency

A placement test like OET Pulse can help you ascertain a candidate's current CEFR level. <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/shop/oet-pulse/> (See page X)

Placement Test

It is important to be clear with all staff involved that, even with high quality education and training, not all candidates will pass the first time. Some candidates (B2+/C1+) may require longer courses to reach the necessary level.



*Very approximate indication of equivalency

Note: There is a good chance that the B2+ and C1 groups will reach the NMC required level for registration in all four skills after taking an OET approved course

The pathway to success:
best practice checklist

1 Initial level assessment

Know candidates' starting points and be realistic about the commitment in terms of time and effort required to pass the English exam. Arrange a pre-course language assessment to map candidates' English levels to the scores they need. Where possible, use an assessment geared to the kind of language candidates need to learn for OET. Use the results to identify how many hours candidates need to study and where students can learn together.

3 Provide support and mentoring

from within the hospital. Establish yourself or a colleague as a mentor to support and guide candidates through the process. Provide resources and make it easy for candidates to attend classes and take the test. This increases engagement and motivation. Having a contact person at the hospital for candidates to speak to on any issues related to the course has a positive impact. Familiarise yourself with the requirements of the OET test so you can discuss it in an informed way.

2 Choose training providers

with a track record e. g. OET Premium Preparation Providers (PPPs) (<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/preparation-providers/>). OET's PPPs have been endorsed by OET to offer courses that provide learners with the required language level and skills to reach their targeted OET score. They have the expertise and training in English-for-special-purposes required for improving results – especially good for higher level students who may have plateaued.

4 Work in partnership with the provider

Keep talking to the course provider, for example through regular catch-up meetings, so you understand how each candidate is doing and can quickly address any issues.

5 Release staff to train

Agree how many hours of paid study leave you will negotiate for EL preparation. This enables candidates to focus on their studies, do their homework and revise as they approach test day. Knowing the Trust supports them in this way improves commitment and motivation. It also mitigates against any burnout resulting from taking on a considerable study load in addition to full-time work. Taking night shifts during the course is also unhelpful. OET preparation providers report a clear correlation between allocated study time on the one hand and positive results with more first-time passes on the other.

 **Best practice example**

“We included 10 paid hours of study time a week which most people managed to take advantage of. This was all signed off by the Chief Nurse and heads of nursing. It caused some challenges with the rosters, but because we had time to plan this and those on the course were committed, it was possible to work around. However, there was one person not working in a HCSW role that did the course who always worked nights and hadn't discussed this with their manager until a couple of days before or perhaps even not until they started so wasn't realised. This was the one person that didn't pass, so again another essential aspect in my opinion.”

Lisa Punter
Ashford and St Peter's NHS
Foundation Trust

 **Best practice example**

Dr Carolyn Middleton of Aneurin Bevan Health Board says ‘Our formal classroom English teaching is done by a third-party provider. We've got a very good relationship with that company and one of the key things is to have a manager within the company that is overseeing our contracts so there's continuity. We get feedback reports on a weekly basis on all of our candidates which are really helpful for measuring progress and managing expectations. (2019)

Join one of our Clinical Educators' Workshops

Presented by medical English expert, Ros Wright, our 90 minute workshops give you insider knowledge of OET making you better placed to offer practical and pastoral support to candidates. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/oet-33303047829>

Our Introduction to OET for Clinical Educators' video

is an ideal starting point for anyone new to OET. Watch here: <https://event.webinarjam.com/register/233/2on41ag5>



6 Give students flexibility

on where and how they attended online classes. If teaching is online, give students flexibility where possible on how and where they attend lessons from. This may be during the working day away from the clinical area, or outside their working hours. Candidates need a quiet space where they can talk without disturbing others. They need a reasonable internet connection. Having a say in the decision-making process helps candidates be more committed.

7 Provide on-site mock exams

with follow up analysis and candidate tutorials. Timed mock tests are great indicators of progress and show where work still needs to be done. Students understand the timings better and the stress of taking one paper after the other, just as on the test day. They are made aware of any issues specific to them which can then be addressed in the remainder of the course. Students are therefore better prepared for the official test.



Good practice example

Ashford and St Peter's NHS Trust: In 2021, SLC prepared 64 groups of overseas-qualified nurses as healthcare assistants from 35 different NHS Trusts around the country to achieve the grades in OET Nursing required for registration. This case study looks at a group SLC worked with at Ashford and St Peter's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in Middlesex. The organisation of the course and the results achieved are an excellent example of best practice and provide a clear model for others to follow.

Read the full case study:

<https://specialistlanguagecourses.com/oet-nursing-preparation-overseas/>

Troubleshooting

What happens if a candidate fails their English test

If the candidate fails at their first attempt at OET, have a conversation with them on where they think they could improve and also have a discussion with your English language training provider.

They can provide useful advice on what skills the candidate needs to focus on in order to pass. Also, provide the candidate with time to prepare for their second attempt. When budgeting, you should take into account that some of your HCAs will not pass the first time and will need additional support.



Make a plan so that you know what will happen if:

- Candidates fail the English test
- Wards won't release staff for study sessions/support rotations
- Candidates cannot afford the fees they are required to pay
- Candidates drop out and don't complete the programme. "At HUTH any candidates who are unsuccessful at any time during the training programme return to their original substantive post and pay point". Karen Mechen, Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- Grievances are raised from the candidate or the employer (e.g. ward manager).



Extra ideas!

Ensure candidates are aware of all the **free preparation support** available from OET including Facebook Live Q&A sessions and YouTube videos:

<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/preparation-portal/>

Try setting up an OET-dedicated noticeboard to provide information about test dates, webinars, learning resources.

Suggest candidates have a 'buddy' to check on progress/offer support. Urge candidates to pair up and study together and give peer feedback. They could advertise their availability on the noticeboard.



Celebrating success

PIN achieved! What happens next?

Your candidate has passed the process and gained their hard-won NMC PIN! What's next for them?

Celebrate – showcase their achievement through your social media site or newsletter. You might even consider an article for the local newspaper.

Identify suitable vacancies. This may be in a new ward setting that uses their former specialisms and skills, or back in their current setting.



Think About:

- Are vacancies ear-marked for this cohort of candidates?
- Will the nurse have to apply through the usual channels?
- Will they automatically go back to their previous ward and manager?
- Will there need to be a vacancy or will they be added regardless?
- Will the nurse be given prior notice of the vacancies available?
- Will the application and appointment process be the same as standard process?
- What if they don't get the job?

Support and onboarding

Think about what support will be provided once registration is achieved. Are they expected to go onto the ward and get started? Would they receive the same support as a newly qualified nurse joining the Trust whether British-trained or newly-hired from another country? Could they join a preceptorship programme as a new registrant?

"If you're placing these nurses onto a preceptorship programme, it's important to adapt the preceptorship to recognise that some of these nurses have significant clinical and/or management experience.

Devon Marsh
Senior Clinical Educator, Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust

Mentoring future candidates

Your successful candidates could act mentors to support and motivate other candidates coming along the pathway.



Good practice example

"At HUTH, once candidates became qualified, they became part of the Band 5 establishment and remained under their original manager. This was the case whether or not the ward had Band 5 vacancies. We invited people to come to us with any concerns and reviewed the situation as needed."

Evaluation

Feedback to the Board on findings from the programme


Things to consider:

- What was the cost per nurse achieved?
- Which part of the process was most difficult?
- Were there any sticking points in the process?
- Did you get a good number of applicants? Were they suitable applicants?
- What were the outcomes? How many went on to fill vacancies in your Trust? Did any leave to take a Band 5 post in another setting?
- Was your estimated timeframe too long/too short?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Would you recommend this as a recruitment strategy to other Trusts?





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