

CASE STUDY

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

NHS Professionals launches 'Watford Response' staffing pool, giving added flexibility for Bank Members

- ✓ Over 5,000 shifts worked through the Watford Response staffing pool since launch
- ✓ 50,508 extra hours filled at the Trust
- ✓ More flexible opportunities for Bank Members

The Situation

NHS Professionals collaborated with West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust in December 2021 to tackle a shortfall in nursing cover at Watford General Hospital, due to increased demand, short-term vacancies and sickness. Working with the Trust, NHS Professionals designed an innovative new way of working to support the areas in need.



Neeraj Tegala, Allied Health Professional

Laura Higham, Healthcare Assistant/Care Support Worker

CASE STUDY

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

The Solution

Our first step was to use our position as the Trust's managed service provider to assess its workforce challenges. This led to the launch of a 'Watford Response' staffing pool in December 2021.

This initiative was put in place with our Bank Members' work-life balance in mind, providing a flexible solution with more attractive shift patterns. At the same time, the solution added capacity where it was most needed. The pool provided added flexibility for Bank Members because the shifts were designed to fit around the lives of busy working parents and other commitments.

“The Watford Response programme offered our Bank staff the opportunity to work flexible shift times from four hours to 12 hours in an effort to support areas with short-term vacancies.

In the first year it filled over 43,000 hours! It has proved so successful we have now rolled it out to our maternity and paediatric areas.”

Johanna Mills, Temporary Staffing Manager,
West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

To boost engagement and improve fill rates, we released a comprehensive, targeted communication to Bank Members in the local Bank, clearly explaining the Watford Response staffing pool and the added flexibility it would bring. We also managed the process on behalf of the Trust, maintaining open lines of communication, dealing with any queries from Bank Members and including clear directions when arriving for shifts.

To ensure the Trust had consistent shift fill, any Bank Members who cancelled a shift in other wards or areas would not be eligible and a minimum of a four hour shift was required for Bank Members to undertake shifts through the pool. Another benefit to the Trust was the ability to redeploy staff based on their competencies more easily, encouraging cross-working and better use of existing and available Bank Members in the area.



Maria Gkovogianni, Nurse

Cindy Kwarteng, Healthcare Assistant/Care Support Worker

CASE STUDY

West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

The Outcome

Thanks to our strong collaboration with the Trust, the new staffing pool was successful and has become an ongoing initiative. The partnership took the administrative pressure of launching a new initiative away from the Trust, while improving fill rates at one of their hospital sites.

More than 5,000 shifts have been worked through the Watford Response staffing pool since its launch in December 2021, resulting in 50,508 additional hours filled.

The initiative has helped Watford General Hospital to cover short-notice sickness-related absences as well as long-term vacancies, such as maternity leave. In addition, the shifts were easier to adapt and flex to demand on the day – for example, Bank Members could split two hours on one ward and two hours on another.

Nurses and healthcare support workers using the staffing pool felt their feedback about shift patterns had been taken on board and they appreciated the greater flexibility because they were able to split shifts around their other commitments.

“Booking Watford Response shifts through NHS Professionals has benefitted me a lot. It has helped to increase my confidence while working as a registered nurse in new environments. I have been able to develop my skills and apply what I've learned from other areas to my regular ward and it has also provided me with the opportunity to make some extra money.”

Catherine Eneayi Anthony,
Registered Nurse, West Hertfordshire
Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

“The Watford Response shifts have been brilliant for me as I really needed flexibility during the weekdays for childcare reasons. I am able to choose my hours and even receive a higher pay rate. NHS Professionals released the timesheets allowing me to plan ahead of time and they have been very responsive when I had any questions.”

Caroline Goodman,
Healthcare Assistant, West Hertfordshire
Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

The increased flexibility also created new development opportunities for those who wanted to enhance their clinical skills across different specialties and network with colleagues throughout the Trust.

An added bonus was that Bank Members who engaged with the scheme became eligible for an enhanced hourly rate to recognise their commitment and flexibility.

Our support to the Trust continues to grow, and as part of Watford Response, we have introduced additional opportunities for Band 4 nursing associates to support the Trust with its workforce needs.

Overall, the success of this initiative has generated safer staffing levels, greater flexibility and career progression opportunities for those in the pool, helping to improve patient care and support retention.