



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Maria Caulfield MP
Minister of State for Health*

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Tania Bowers
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Association of Professional Staffing Companies (Global) Ltd

By email to: tania.bowers@apsco.org

5 September 2022

Dear Tania,

Thank you for your letter raising your concerns about costs for employers who supply workforce into the NHS on a temporary basis. Please accept my apologies for the delay in this response reaching you.

The deployment of a flexible workforce is an important element of efficiently running the NHS, allowing the NHS to meet demand fluctuations without the need to increase capacity above that which would be required on a sustained basis.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable efforts made by the framework agencies in helping our NHS provide services, especially the efforts in supporting our healthcare system during what has been an unprecedented and challenging time.

However, as I am sure you are aware, one of the aims of the Long Term Plan is to support NHS providers to reduce their agency staff bills and encourage workers back into substantive and bank roles, as well as improving retention.

Where agency spend remains significantly high, a series of measures have been introduced to bring NHS agency expenditure under control. NHS England (NHSE) approved framework operators, including the Workforce Alliance (CCS) have been supporting in the delivery of these measures, one of which is that the price caps set by NHSE would remain the same, to support these aims. Therefore, the increase to National Insurance Contributions, introduced to help ease the financial pressures on the NHS, has been included within the price caps.

Trusts must adhere to the efficiency requirements that the NHS has committed to deliver as part of the 2021 Spending Review, building on the NHS Long Term Plan commitments and delivering value for money for the taxpayer.

In your letter, you also raised the issue of the economic pressures within the healthcare recruitment sector, in particular the impacts on SMEs. We understand this may result in

additional onboarding costs. However, NHSE publishes price caps for agency shifts, setting out the recommended maximum hourly charge that a trust should pay for agency staff. These price caps are a recommended maximum and trusts should try to obtain maximum value for money and remember that the price cap is not a standard or default rate.

Our NHS should only use agencies that are operating on approved frameworks and there are consequences for non-compliance with framework rules or price caps. This is to ensure effective use of taxpayers' money and to protect the quality of care received by our patients

NHSE will continue to work closely with the framework operators and other stakeholders to not only support our workforce during the recovery phase but also consider the strategic direction of travel. They are always keen to engage with suppliers and gather their views via the framework operators and I encourage you to continue to feed back to support their strategic decision-making.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maria', with a stylized flourish above the name.

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