

Recruitment Survey

The Hospital Physicist's Association maintains an ongoing survey to assess the recruitment situation for medical physicists and clinical engineers. The information for this assessment is obtained by sending a questionnaire to departments that advertise such jobs within the NHS. The questionnaire tries to establish the number and suitability of applicants for the post advertised and the length of time a post remains unfilled or how many times a post is advertised before being successfully filled. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of those colleagues who take the time to complete these questionnaires. The information collected is used by the association in negotiations with the NHS employers over issues that affect the terms and conditions of our members and also general workforce planning and training.

The information is published here and is freely available for use. We would hope that if you use these reports you would acknowledge the source as "The Hospital Physicists Association a national branch of Unite the Union" and that you would encourage your colleagues to complete any questionnaires we send to them in the future or even to contact us proactively with information.

Recruitment Survey April 2008 – March 2009

During this period a total of 209 questionnaires were sent in response to adverts and 75 (36%) were returned. The table below breaks the information obtained from the responses into broad specialities within the medical physics and clinical engineering professions.

	Nuclear Medicine	Radiotherapy	Engineering	Diagnostic Radiology	Radiation Protection	Other
Total no. of posts surveyed	30	101	20	42	11	5
No. of responses to survey	7 (23%)	43 (43%)	3 (15%)	15 (36%)	7 (64%)	0 (0%)
The rest of the table is based on the information from the returned survey forms only.						
Av no. of applicants per post (Range)	5.7 (0-44)	4.6 (0-13)	16.0 (10-27)	3.5 (0-11)	2.3 (0-8)	
Av no. of internal NHS applicants per post	3.1	2.4	6.0	1.8	0.7	
Av no. of external applicants per post	2.6	2.2	10.0	1.7	1.6	
Rate of successful recruitment	43%	49%	100%	60%	14%	
Proportion of posts previously advertised	42%	31%	75%	40%	57%	
Posts re-advertised that were still unsuccessful	44%	55%	0%	17%	50%	
Previous post holders lost to the NHS (inc retirement)	14%	14%	0%	0%	14%	

Rate of successful recruitment by advertised pay band	Nuclear Medicine	Radiotherapy	Engineering	Diagnostic Radiology	Radiation Protection	Other
7	40% (2/5)	59% (13/22)	100% (2/2)	88% (7/8)	0% (0/2)	
8a	0% (0/1)	47% (7/15)	100% (1/1)	20% (1/5)	50% (1/2)	
8b	100% (1/1)	20% (1/5)		50% (1/2)		
8c		0% (0/1)			0% (0/2)	
8d					0% (0/1)	
9						

Overall 49% of posts were filled.

41% had been previously advertised with a failure to appoint a suitable applicant. Of those posts that had previously been advertised, 39% failed to attract a suitable candidate second or third time around.

There is still a difference in the success rates in recruiting different grades of staff. 62% of posts were filled at band 7 while only 42% and 38% of posts were filled in bands 8a and 8b. The breakdown of advertised posts in each pay band was: 52% band 7, 32% band 8a, 11% band 8b, 4% band 8c, 1% band 8d and no band 9.

Breaking the data down between regions showed the success of the SW in recruiting and difficulties in the SE (but not including London). The NE and Northern Ireland did not offer sufficient information to include and the number of returns for some other regions was limited, so these figures should be treated with caution. The success rates were: 80% in the South West, 63% in the Midlands, 56% in the North West, 50% in Wales and Scotland, 48% in London and 38% in the South East.

There still appears to be a shortage of suitably qualified staff in the radiation protection speciality; this possibly reflects the lower number of posts (posts advertised broken down by specialism: 48% radiotherapy, 20% diagnostic radiology, 14% nuclear medicine, 10% medical engineering, 5% radiation protection and 2% IT & senior management) and hence a reluctance amongst trainees to specialise in an area where advertised posts are few and far between; it may also reflect that trainees enter the profession because of their interest in clinical specialities.

77% of the returned questionnaires provided details as to the future of the previous job holder indicating whether they still worked for the NHS or had left for the private sector or retired etc. From this it is known that 8 physicists and engineers (14%) left the NHS during the period. If this is extrapolated to the whole sample then the NHS could have lost 29 physicists/engineers in the 12 months.

Nearly 30% of the returned questionnaires indicated a new post had been created, half of these being in radiotherapy.

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