Case Study

How Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS FT significantly optimised agency spend by using Locum's Nest Agency Management Solution



Locum's Nest.
Your total workforce solution

NHS
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

“The Locum's Nest platform has become an integral part of our workflow and the Agency Management Solution has simplified our processes, improved efficiency, and given us the tools we need to make data-driven and informed decisions about our staffing needs. The impact has been tangible, both in terms of cost savings and operationally.

I am proud of all the collaboration everyone involved throughout this journey and can't wait to see even more impactful results of our work together!”

— Karen Uttley, Deputy Chief People Officer



Background

In August 2021, ASPH made the strategic decision to transition from its previous systems to Locum's Nest for managing their HCA, Nursing, and Midwifery agency staffing needs.

This was driven by a need for ASPH to have a homogeneous workforce solution across staff groups to help with visibility and reporting. Furthermore, given the long term partnership for doctors, ASPH was confident in Locum's Nest ability to deliver a tailored solution for other staffing groups.

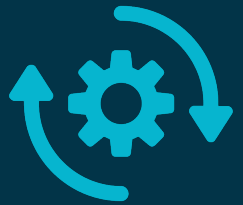
The team evolved Locum's Nest Agency Management Solution as per Trust needs and rolled out in September 2021. Training sessions for agencies started in October 2021, paving the way for the full launch of the Agency Management System in November 2021.



Implementation Journey

By January 2022, the transition from Allocate to Locum's Nest was complete, although there was a partial reliance on paper timesheets initially, until all teams adjusted to the system. ASPH remained committed to evolving their workforce management system and processes with regular check-ins and a dedicated timeline set for enhancements and updates until July 2023.

By then, the need for paper timesheets was removed and the solution was fully adopted by Trust teams and all agencies used by the Trust.

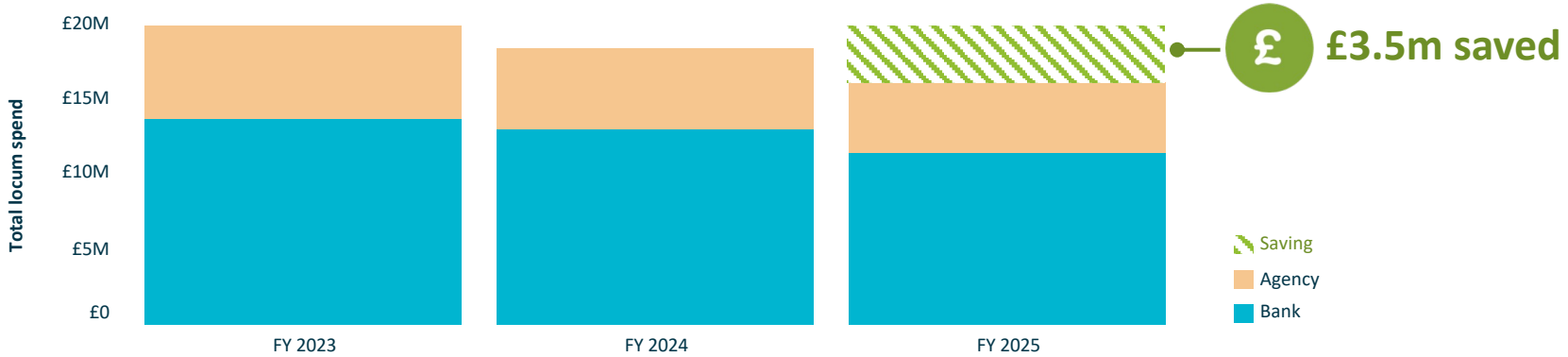


Impact

Significant and consistent reduction in agency spend and use.

For example, the total spend (i.e. total demand) on HCA, Nurses, and Midwife staffing groups decreased by over £3.5m in two years.

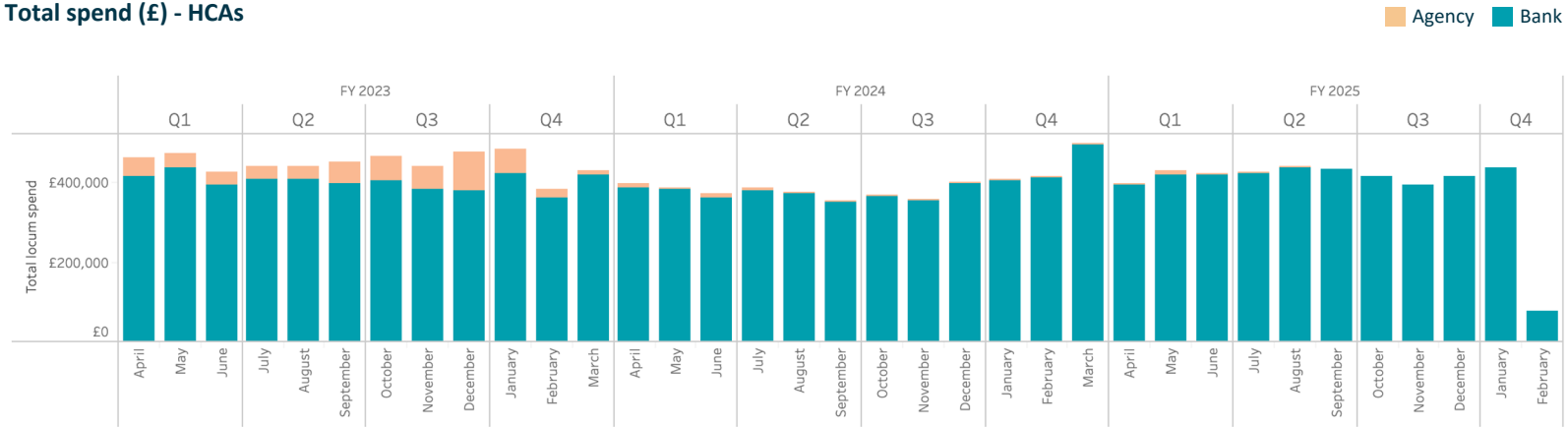
Total spend (£) - HCAs & Nurses and Midwives (FY 2023 vs FY 2025)



Impact

In particular, the elimination of the agency spend is apparent when we look at the monthly spend trend for the HCA group.

Total spend (£) - HCAs



Impact

Additionally, the Locum's Nest platform captures shifts that were sent to agency but were subsequently filled by bank due to the solution’s embedded bank-first policy.

Analysing these shifts over a year reveals a total of 12,267 shifts falling into this category.

This corresponds to significant cost avoidance as these shifts would have been filled at higher cost had it not been for the end-to-end bank-first solution.

Cost of shifts had these been filled by agency	£5,020,509
Actual cost of shifts filled by bank	£3,352,705
Cost avoidance	£1,668,268

How was that impact achieved?

A key feature of the Agency Management Solution is its embedded bank-first policy.

Once a shift is sent to agency, the shift itself is still open and visible to members of the ASPH staff bank to apply to via the Locum's Nest app. This means that even if an agency candidate fills the shift, this can be cancelled if a staff bank member applies within Trust process remits. This is a reflection of a true bank-first approach which aims to use agencies as efficiently as possible.

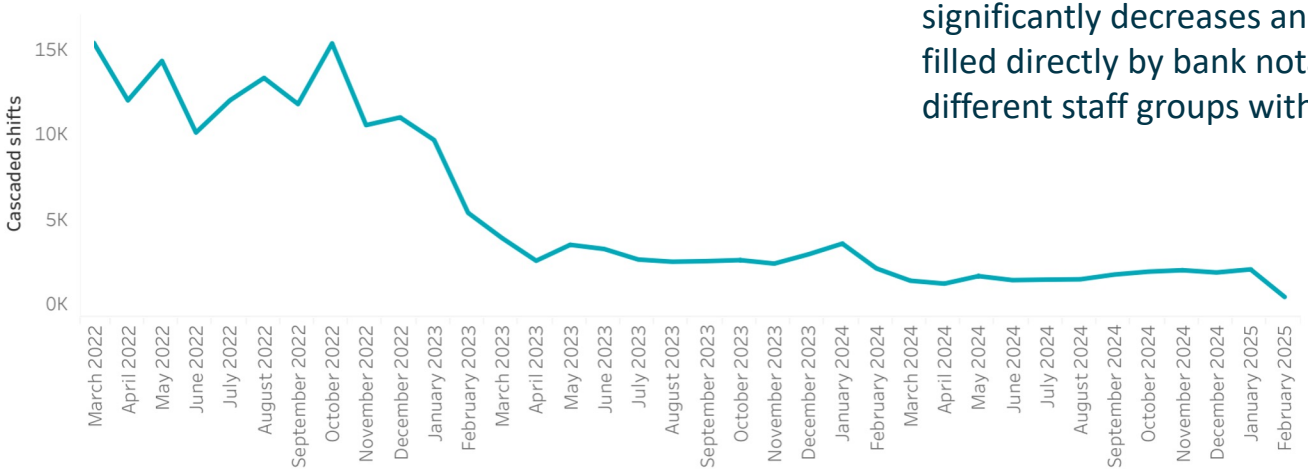
The implementation of a bank-first policy at ASPH via Locum's Nest Agency Management Solution led to a noticeable drop in reliance on agency and its associated costs.



How was that impact achieved?

If we take a closer look, we observe a few trends…

For example, the number of shifts sent to agency steadily decreases.

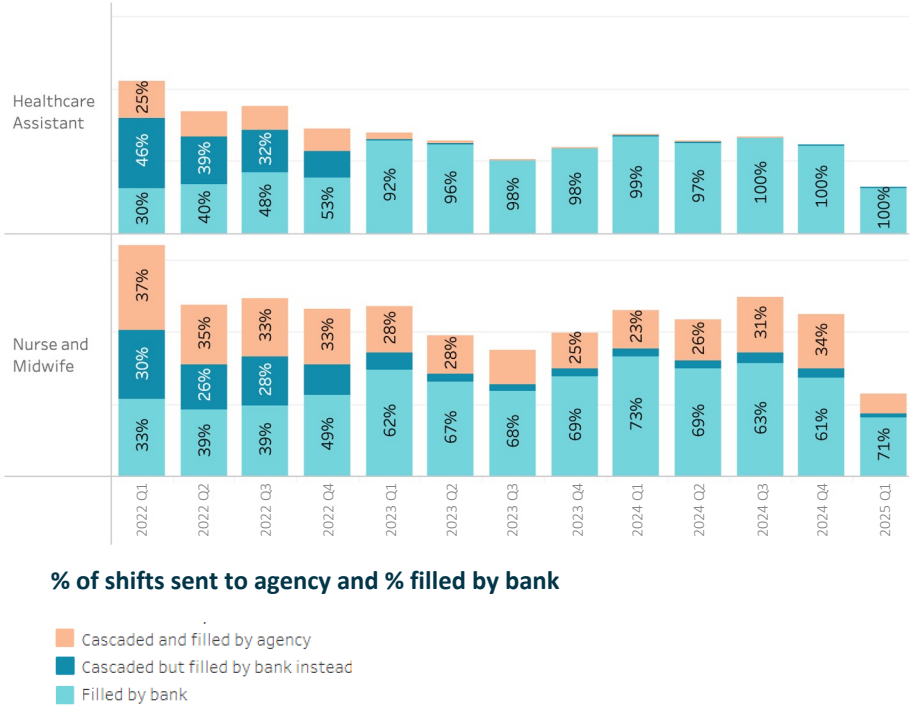


Number of shifts sent to agencies

Initially, many shifts were unnecessarily sent to agency, potentially out of fear of remaining unfilled.

However, with time, the number of these shifts significantly decreases and the number of shifts filled directly by bank notably increases across different staff groups without a drop in fill rate.

How was that impact achieved?



% of shifts sent to agency and % filled by bank

Cascaded and filled by agency
Cascaded but filled by bank instead
Filled by bank

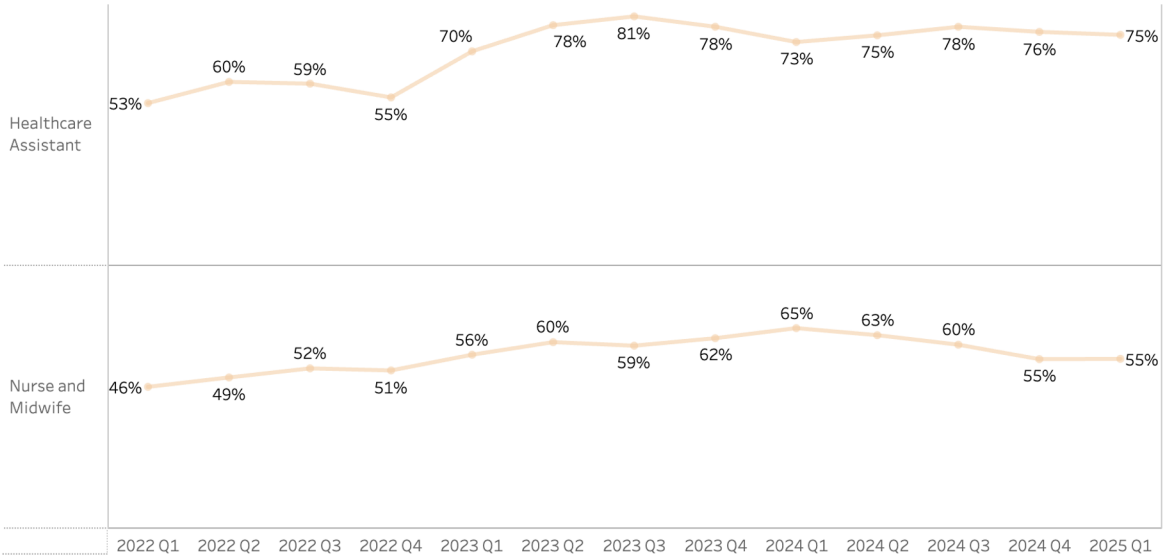
This overall demand decrease can be attributed to a combination of factors:

- Simplified shift booking for rota teams and bank staff
- Enhanced rostering processes, systems, and policies for efficient scheduling and staffing
- Transparent pricing visibility helping teams in understanding the comparative costs of agency workers versus bank staffing options

How was that impact achieved?

Insights also confirm that shift fill rate is maintained high throughout.

Total fill rate



Beyond £: Enhanced control and visibility of workforce management

Locum's Nest empowered ASPH with sophisticated control mechanisms, including multi-layered bidding processes, allowing for better decision-making and cost management.

For example, shifts are only sent to agency when certain criteria are met, which ASPH sets out i.e. usually when the shift needs to be urgently filled and the team wants to increase its chances of it being filled. However, this cascading process only happens as per Trust processes per department.

This additional approval process adds a further element of tighter control and governance, which ultimately helps reduce the number of unnecessary agency cascades.

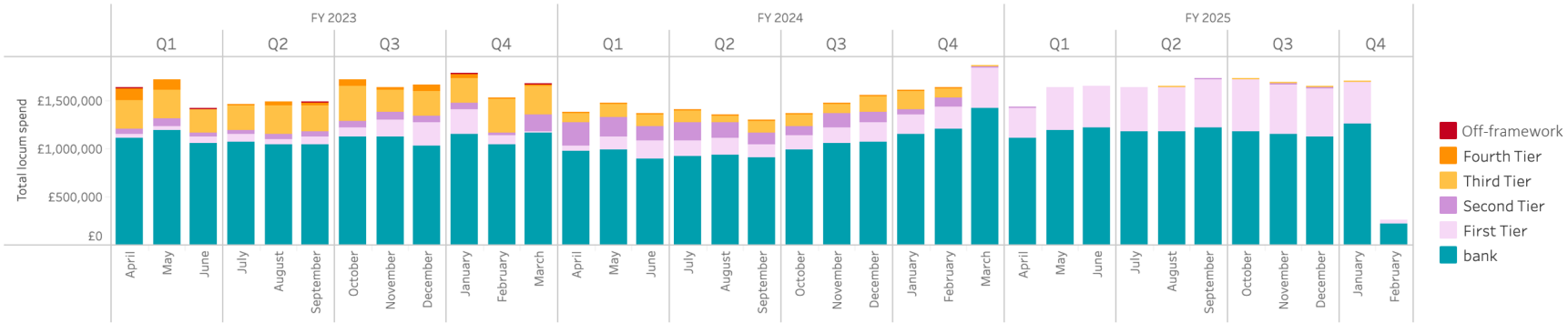


Beyond £: Enhanced control and visibility of workforce management

In addition, we can see that Locum's Nest Agency management solution has helped ASPH fill agency shifts with lower tiers across different staff groups, which means less agency fees in the long-term.

This is a particularly significant trend for Nurse and Midwife shifts where the data shows that the Trust managed to shift agency spend to lower tiers, almost eliminating the use of off-framework agencies.

Total agency spend by tier for Nurses and Midwives



Beyond £: Enhanced control and visibility of workforce management

This demonstrates the additional layer of visibility that the solution offers workforce teams when selecting agencies and shifts, who no longer have to rely on the first-come, first served agency choice to fill an urgent shift and can have access to a wide variety of criteria to help in decision-making.

Furthermore, the solution has given ASPH greater control and choice in selecting agency workers. This is based on information availability around agency bids being put forward, which was not available before. This in turn enables the Trust to accept bids based on robust criteria beyond urgency and away from first-come, first-served basis, ultimately leading to improved workforce experience and quality of care.

For example, all agency bids for a shift have to put forward a validated and named healthcare worker. This means that agencies cannot hold shifts and swap workers at the last minute. It also means that the trust can have full visibility on the healthcare workers being put forward and make a decision based on the information provided beyond just urgency. This is especially important in specialties where very specific skill sets and experience is required.

Overall, the adoption of Locum's Nest Agency Management Solution has helped ASPH towards achieving its workforce goals.

The significant reduction in agency use and spend at ASPH can be attributed to the implementation of best-in-class policies for rostering and bank management, spearheaded by the Chief Nurse. This proactive approach has not only optimised workforce utilisation but also fostered a culture of accountability and transparency within the Trust.

The increased confidence in the Locum's Nest system supported by an embedded bank-first policy in-built rules around sending shifts to agency have streamlined the staffing process and further minimised reliance on expensive agencies.

By taking a strong stance against agency pressures and enforcing transparency in staffing decisions, the Trust continues to demonstrate its commitment to efficient resource management, financial sustainability, and better patient care.



“As the Workforce Deployment Systems Project Manager, working with our internal Temporary Staffing Team, we have integrated Locum's Nest into our daily operations. We've navigated through a mix of challenges, breakthroughs, and plenty of learning moments, to refine our processes to ensure successful implementation. However, what really stands out to me is the incredible teamwork and dedication that's gone into making this happen.

Together, we've not only improved our processes but also made a real impact on how we better manage our workforce. As we look to the future, I'm excited about the possibilities for even more collaboration and innovation with Locum's Nest and I can't wait to see where it leads us next.”

— Debbie Beck, Workforce Deployment Systems Project Manager



"NHS temporary workforce spending surpassed £10bn last fiscal year, split evenly between bank and agency staff. Our partner Trusts have excelled in establishing safe and sustainable workforce solutions over 8 years, pioneering collaborative banks across the country. To innovate and stay one step ahead of the curve, in collaboration with our partners, we developed our NHS-First Agency Solution, now live for a couple of years with remarkable results.

Congratulations to Ashford & St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Excited for the next phase of our partnership!

— Ahmed Shahrabani, Co-founder of Locum's Nest



Interested in learning how we could help you with your agency management/ spending goals?

Reach out to our team:
ahmed@locumsnest.co.uk

Locum's Nest.
Your total workforce solution

NHS
Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust