

Shared vision.
Better together

NHS
Shared Business Services

CASE STUDY

From applicant to colleague – automation connects Bristol's recruitment journey

A connected suite of automations at Bristol NHS Foundation Trust is transforming recruitment, reducing repetitive administration and giving skilled recruitment teams more time to support candidates, hiring managers and workforce priorities.

> These changes have supported a 21% reduction in time to hire for AfC staff and a 50% reduction for Medical and Dental appointments."

Sophie Dilworth
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THE CHALLENGE

A high-volume journey constrained by localised processes and manual hand-offs.

- Two trusts with different processes and systems preparing for merger.
- **135,000 applications** and around **8,000 new starters** each year.
- **328,000** people employed across the new trust.

Recruitment links workforce plans and patient care. Yet candidate journeys across Trac, ESR, Trust ID and local systems relied on repeated manual transfer, validation and reconciliation of information – while teams maintained rigorous employment-check standards, payroll accuracy and local governance.

These manual hand-offs created avoidable delays, rekeying and error risk, and took skilled teams away from candidates, hiring managers and complex cases.

Rules-based work included linking records, generating conditional offers, processing digital identity checks, preparing ESR records and assembling outcome documentation.

As the predecessor organisations moved towards merger, the partnership needed to align ways of working – not automate two sets of legacy processes.

The ambition was one connected, scalable recruitment journey – standardised before automation and designed around candidates, hiring managers and workforce teams.





THE SOLUTION

Standardise first, then automate the connected journey.

Bristol's workforce and recruitment teams co-designed the programme with NHS Shared Business Services, supported by UiPath, ESR, payroll and IT colleagues. Together, they mapped the existing journey, identified pain points and agreed core principles and future processes before development began.

Four core principles:

- Standardise before automating, retaining only legitimate local requirements.
- Design around users and the candidate journey, not individual system limitations.
- Introduce automations progressively, monitor exceptions and use data to drive continuous improvement.
- Keep people in control of judgement-based activity, complex cases and candidate communication.

Connecting seven processes:

1 ESR vacancy creation and linking to Trac
2 Generating conditional offer letters
3 Initiating and processing digital identity checks
4 Validating professional registrations
5 ESR record creation
6 Preparing new-starter information for payroll
7 Securely archiving candidate recruitment documentation



THE RESULT

Faster hiring. More capacity. Better experience.

Connected automation is improving the recruitment journey from vacancy creation to new colleague.

Faster candidate progression. Identity-check turnaround has halved from two weeks to one, contracts are issued four days faster, and the programme has supported wider time-to-hire reductions of 50% for Medical and Dental staff and 21% for Agenda for Change staff.

Reliable performance at scale. Automations are achieving a 99% overall success rate. Conditional offers are generated in approximately three minutes instead of 15 – an 80% reduction. The solutions also absorb bulk-recruitment surges while continuing to operate within strict SLAs.

Capacity returned to recruitment. The programme is forecast to return more than 10,000 staff hours annually – equivalent to approximately £190,000 in annual pay-cost efficiency.

Insight beyond automation. Trend analysis exposes recruitment bottlenecks and upstream candidate-data issues, enabling Bristol teams to address root causes earlier and reduce downstream rework.

Contact sbs.hello@nhs.net to find out more

SUMMARY

- **10,000+ staff hours** forecast back annually
- Contributed to a **50% reduction in time to hire** for medical and dental staff
- Contributed to a **21% reduction in time to hire** for Agenda for Change staff
- **5.6 FTE | £190,000** annualised capacity and pay-cost efficiency
- **99% overall automation success**
- **91% candidate satisfaction**
- **80%+** faster conditional offers
- **73%** of surveyed colleagues support further automation

The next chapter

Expansion into Deanery recruitment and internal candidates, supported by opportunities for enhanced workforce insight and appropriately governed agentic automation.

The programme shows how standardised processes, NHS workforce expertise and automation can work together to improve resilience and give recruitment professionals more time for the people who depend on them.