



Yorkshire Ambulance Service



NHS Trust

An Aspirant Foundation Trust

Values Based Recruitment

Case Study

'Further to my successful attendance at the selection event on Saturday, firstly just wanted to express how good I found the experience. The whole day was probably one of the best recruitment exercises I've experienced.'



Our Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission

Saving lives, caring for you

Our Vision

To provide an ambulance service for Yorkshire which is continuously improving patient care, high performing, always learning and delivers value for money.

Our Values

Working together for patients

We work with others to give the best care we can

Everyone counts

We act with openness, honesty and integrity - listening to and acting on feedback from patients, staff and partners

Commitment to quality of care

We always give the highest level of clinical care

Always compassionate

Our staff are professional, dedicated and caring

Respect and dignity

We treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect

Enhancing and improving lives

We continuously seek out improvements

Contents

Contents	2
Introduction	3
What was the issue?	4
What did we do?	4
A single selection centre for the whole of Yorkshire	5
Arriving at the recruitment selection centre	5
The Carousel	6
Occupational Groups	8
When does the centre run?	8
Diversity	8
Disabled candidates	8
Next steps	8
Fitness testing	9
The business case and financial justification	10

Introduction

Yorkshire Ambulance Service is an integral part of the NHS in Yorkshire. We work closely with hospitals, health trusts and healthcare professionals, as well as the other emergency services. We cover the whole of Yorkshire, from isolated moors and dales to urban areas, coastline and inner cities.

We employ over 4,500 staff, who together with over 3,000 volunteers enables us to provide a 24-hour emergency and healthcare service to more than five million people.

The people we recruit range from front line responders such as paramedics, care assistants and call handlers through to the full range of people, skills and professions needed to keep a modern ambulance service running. We have mechanics, cleaners, accountants, trainers, logisticians to name a few.

Everyone in YAS is aligned to our vision of ***saving lives and caring for you.*** We believe that all new recruits should be aligned to this vision and be able to demonstrate a clear commitment to our values.

This case study explains our innovative journey taken during 2013 to deliver values based recruitment.



What was the issue?

The recruitment process within Yorkshire Ambulance Service was “traditional public sector” with an advert being issued in response to a vacancy. A shortlisting exercise was completed to select candidates for interview and a panel interview conducted.

The selection process for front line staff could take up to 18 weeks and this led to operational gaps across the organisation. By January 2013 there were 106 vacancies in the Accident and Emergency (A&E) workforce alone. Normal turnover was low at less than 5%, however the recruitment process could not keep pace with this.

A new workforce plan agreed in January 2013 identified a need for a significant recruitment effort. Our aim was to reach an operational A&E workforce of 2106 staff by October 2013. There were concerns from managers over levels of training attrition and a more general concern from localities that the calibre and motivation of newly appointed staff was causing concern. Overall, there was a view that this was a symptom of the local employment market and little could be done without significant investment in recruitment advertising or significant changes in terms and conditions to attract different candidates.

What did we do?

Recognising that we had limited resources and limited time the HR team took responsibility for designing and running a pilot to address these issues. A series of brainstorms and the collective wisdom of the team set out some clear priorities for the new approach.

- Must be candidate focused and provide an opportunity for interaction
- Must give a realistic expectation of what the job involves
- Must have clear standards and focus on attitude, values and behaviours
- Must reflect the image of a professional uniformed service
- Must give the candidates an opportunity to self-deselect
- Must provide unsuccessful candidates with the opportunity of immediate developmental feedback
- Must give successful candidates an immediate decision
- Must include operational managers and more importantly, operational staff
- Must be focused to our organisational values

In the space of a few weeks, a clear concept had been developed and more importantly a core team had taken ownership, created the energy, enthusiasm and the willingness to take a risk in trying something different. The first pilot centre ran in March 2013 with 60 candidates.



A single selection centre for the whole of Yorkshire

We took the decision to run the recruitment and selection centre at a single location within Yorkshire. Partly because we were not been able to find another suitably impressive venue, but also because we wanted to attract those who were serious about working for us and willing to put some effort into applying. We are committed to principles of fair and open recruitment practices and will run targeted campaigns in hard to recruit locations or to target under-represented groups in support of our diversity strategy, but candidates will always be selected on individual merit and are expected to travel to the centre. So far, we have examples of candidates travelling from all areas of Yorkshire, from neighbouring counties and as far afield as London, Devon, Edinburgh and Australia!

Arriving at the recruitment selection centre

The *Lifewise* centre near Rotherham is a purpose built theatre set managed by South Yorkshire Police to teach children about safety. This includes a reception area and classrooms suitable for presentations and more importantly the opportunity for role play in a realistic setting. From the outside it is an industrial unit and on entering looks like any other office reception and meeting room, albeit with a slight emergency services theme e.g. the meeting rooms are Red for the fire room, green for the NHS room and blue for the police room.

Candidates are asked to attend the centre based on their completion of an application form using the normal NHS process. This is now evolving so that the application form will be the last stage of the process in future (see next steps).

Candidates who attend the selection centre are given clear instructions on what to bring. This includes ID documents, qualifications and photocopies of all these documents. The first part of the selection process is to check they have brought what they were asked to bring. If they have not, we explain that following instructions and attention to detail is very important to us and unfortunately, we are unable to take their application forward but that they may wish to reapply for a future centre. This may seem a harsh approach, but our intention is to make a very clear point up front. In some cases, rejected candidates have been known to negotiate a solution that allows them to travel home or visit a supermarket to obtain photocopies and depending on their approach, the centre manager has the discretion to accommodate if there is capacity. Some candidates have returned at subsequent centres with the correct documents and some have never been heard of again.

There are many subtleties in the assessment approach. The theatre set has background heating but in the winter feels cold and in the summer feels hot. The candidates are told about the need to bring clothing suitable for these conditions. They are also told that they could be in the centre for several hours and to make sure they bring lunch and drinks. We are continually observing how self-reliant the candidates are in this respect.

The candidates are told that photographs may be taken and to tell us if they are uncomfortable with this and would prefer not to be photographed. Where candidates indicate that they would prefer not to be photographed, this gives us the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have, as the reality for front line staff is that the public will often video and photograph an emergency incident. It is not unusual for us to take photographs during the selection process to test for any reaction.

Once the documentary checks are completed, candidates are then taken to a waiting area where refreshments are available. The room is designed with tables spread throughout. This room is observed by a member of the selection centre team who is observing to see who sits together and interacts as opposed to candidates who sit at separate tables and do not interact. We are specifically looking for people who are willing to engage with others as opposed to individuals who want to sit on their own and interact with their smartphone!

The next stage is a 30 minute presentation about Yorkshire Ambulance Service. It is an opportunity to dispel any pre-conceived ideas about what the service is and that daily life in any of our business or operational areas has little similarity to the various dramas on television. Candidates are told about the purpose of the centre and that it is a two way process. It is for us to assess them but more importantly, it is for them to assess us and decide if this is the potential life changing career choice they want.

The candidates are then required to undertake some written accuracy tests. Candidates are tested on spelling, number and word accuracy, all of which are skills that we consider essential to ensuring the delivery of safe, professional and efficient services. These tests have also been designed to include some distraction tactics to simulate a typical working environment.



The Carousel

The candidates are then taken to the theatre set and commence a “carousel” of activities. Throughout the carousel, they are accompanied by a member of the HR team. When they walk in, they see a Yorkshire street scene with houses, shops, buildings and vehicles.

The exercises, experiences and role plays can be adapted depending on the job roles but for the majority of candidates, they follow a theoretical patient journey and provide the opportunity to interact with operational staff. This starts with a bit more information on our call handling capability and then listening to an incoming call to either our NHS111 service or the 999 service. The call is a serious incident with a caller in distress about a domestic situation. There is lots of emotion and ends with the arrival of the paramedic on scene. Throughout the call, we are observing the



candidates to see how they react to this and after the call, they are asked to provide key pieces of information about the call. We are checking their emotional resilience, their appreciation of some of the realities our service deals with, and whether they can recall key information throughout this process.

Candidates are then given the opportunity to talk to operational staff and/or colleagues

whom they may be working with if selected. This part of the process is not scripted although the crew have been selected because they are role models in their profession. The candidates are encouraged to ask questions, look at and try the equipment they are likely to be working with.

Next, the candidates are given some information about our volunteer community responders and are provided with instruction on how to do effective chest compressions on an unconscious casualty. Basic Life Support and emergency first aid are skills that all staff within the ambulance service are expected to be able to do regardless of job role. The candidates are observed to see if they can follow instructions, are willing to step forward and apply the skills they have learned in an effective way. We also want to make sure they can bend down, get back up and don't get out of breath! This is a very, very, basic fitness test but this in itself has led us to de-selecting candidates.

We are looking to include a more detailed fitness assessment for our operational roles in future centres. For non-operational roles, adjustments can be made for candidates who have a disability or use mobility aids such as wheelchairs but we would still expect them to be able to render assistance or provide leadership and direction in an emergency situation.

Next, they are met by a paramedic who is on their way to an emergency. Candidates are asked if they would like to observe. We use various scenarios from a pub scene to visiting someone's house. We typically address issues of safeguarding and challenge the candidates with real life dilemmas that they may be faced with. We are not assessing first aid or clinical skills, but focus more on how they make judgements and assumptions. We use social settings as this is more typical of the work undertaken by the service on a day to day basis.



In the final exercise they are asked to work as a group and given a typical first aid incident to deal with. Again, it is not the direct application of first aid treatment that is being assessed, we are observing how they approach the incident, engage with the patient and engage with others in the group.

By this time, candidates have typically been with us for a couple of hours and they are put into another observed holding area.

Throughout the carousel, every member of the selection centre team is observing the candidates and is able to offer independent feedback to the HR lead assessor. This is collated and the HR lead assessor correlates this with their own observations to create an overall view of each candidate against a framework. Candidates are then met on a 1 to 1 basis. Candidates who are scored highly across the framework are offered conditional contracts of employment. All other candidates are offered immediate developmental feedback.

Occupational Groups

So far we have used this process to select colleagues for our emergency operations centres including call takers and dispatchers; Emergency Care Assistants and some corporate roles. In the coming months we will be expanding into Patient Transport Service and NHS 111.



When does the centre run?

We initially trialled the centre on a Saturday. This was the easiest date to secure the venue and operational crews. Subsequently we have tried weekdays but the feedback from candidates was overwhelmingly for a Saturday, especially from those already in employment. We have decided to keep with the weekend model as this also helps reinforce that we are not a Monday to Friday organisation.

Diversity

The centre has been diversity impact assessed and by carefully selecting a staff team supported by professionally qualified HR staff, we are confident that this new approach will improve and enhance our approach. Within the staff team, we have had active participation and support from our in house groups including the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) and the BEM,(Black and Ethnic Minority).

Disabled candidates

The centre was recently visited by one of our expert patients who is a wheelchair user. The centre is wheelchair accessible and all of the exercises can be adapted depending on job role and the nature of the disability.



Next steps

The current recruitment application process is being changed and by the end of 2013, we will reduce the number of specific adverts and move to more generic career recruitment. The centre approach

has evolved rapidly and we are confident that a generic assessment process combined with clear brand marketing can attract a wide range of candidates to match the wide range of roles we have. We are making a clear statement that we want to employ people who have particular values and will be focused on patient care first and foremost before any professional or functional skills regardless of their role in the organisation.

The first step in this new process will be the launch of a web based recruitment micro site with a link to an on-line behavioural assessment. Based on this assessment candidates will be given immediate feedback. If they fit the profile we are looking for they will be invited to self-select an assessment centre date and time. If they do not match the profile they will be given developmental feedback and an indication of how long they should wait before trying again. The candidate profile capability has been developed in partnership with a commercial company *“Matching People 2 Jobs”* and is based on a customer service model which we believe is highly relevant to all our occupational groups within the service.



The support of *“Matching People 2 Jobs”* is the only external support we have sought. This process has been designed and owned by the HR team with the support and involvement of staff in key operational areas.

The future approach will mean candidates potentially getting to the end of the assessment centre without completing the standard NHS application form. We are currently considering whether the application form should be filled in at this final stage or whether there is a smarter way of capturing the required data throughout the process. Our aim is to be in a position where we advise the candidate on what job role we think they are most suited towards and identify potential longer term career progression routes. This makes the traditional application less relevant other than for some specialist corporate roles where people will not naturally or necessarily come to us through generic Ambulance Service advertising.

Our operational colleagues are passionate about being involved in the process and while we are keen to involve as many people as possible in the selection process, there is an element of self-regulation in ensuring only those who have the highest level of professional standards and are role models for the organisation are utilised.

We are now developing some tracking software which will allow candidates, managers and the HR team to track candidate progression at any stage in the process. This will become very important as we create pools of candidates to match anticipated future vacancies. We are keen to manage expectations and explain to candidates that securing a career in Yorkshire Ambulance Service is very worthwhile, but is not easy and may take some time. We need to be certain and so do they.

Fitness testing

A fitness testing standard is currently being developed in conjunction with our new occupational health provider and this will be incorporated into the selection process during 2014.

The business case and financial justification

There is a perception that an assessment centre is much more expensive than interviewing. Our experience is that we have been able to run this new approach with much better results for less financial investment than traditional interviews.

Typically we would shortlist 100 candidates for interview and run panel interviews with up to three panel members. 300 hours of investment when compared to a one day event for the same 100 candidates speaks for itself.

Between March and September, 185 people have been selected and offered employment contracts using the new approach. Most training is conducted in-house and our training centres have reported a marked increase in the calibre of candidates arriving at the training centre. Training attrition has reduced by 60% in comparison with the previous year and this is a much better outcome for both the Trust and for the candidates.

The target to increase our A&E trained workforce to 2106 front line A&E staff in post by October 2013 was achieved.





Yorkshire Ambulance Service

Human Resources Department
Trust Headquarters
Brindley Way
Wakefield 41 Business Park
Wakefield
WF2 0XQ

October 2013