

New digital platform to enable retired consultants to return to the NHS

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The Government have announced plans for a new digital platform that will enable recently retired consultants to return to the NHS to carry out outpatient appointments. The new initiative is designed to help reduce waiting lists and is set to commence in the autumn.

Under the scheme, newly retired consultants will be able to sign up to a new digital NHS platform and offer their skills to trusts across England to undertake in-person or virtual outpatients' appointments. Trusts will be able to cross match consultants based on their skillset and availability to appointments they need covering. As there is the opportunity to offer virtual appointments, the consultant could be based anywhere in the country.

The scheme will be open to consultants with NHS experience who have recently retired but have an active registration on the specialist register and the GMC registry and who also hold a Certificate of Completion of Training. Appropriate checks will also be carried out before doctors become fully registered on the platform

The introduction of the scheme will also coincide with the planned changes to NHS pension scheme rules and the broader package of pension reforms announced in the spring budget (see [here](#)) which the Government hopes will encourage more doctors and NHS staff to remain in work for longer.

Current workforce data shows that approximately 1,000 retire from the NHS each year and therefore the new scheme will offer flexibility to those doctors who wish to continue working in the NHS but in a less structured way. This will no doubt be very welcome news for NHS employers who continue to battle with current workforce crisis which shows no signs of abating. It will also provide Trusts with an alternative to using agency staff and therefore help to reduce costs.

A recent [report](#) published by the Institute for Government stated that the increased retirement rate meant "experienced practitioners are [often] being replaced by junior staff who do not have the experience or authority to make necessary decisions". Retaining more senior experienced doctors, even on a flexible basis, means that vital skills and experience will be retained within the NHS.

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