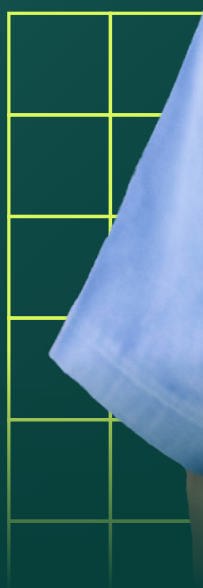


# Healthcare's identity crisis

How recruitment delays  
are exacerbating  
staff shortages in  
UK healthcare



Digidentity ✱



## Key findings

# 97%

Agree that there are recruitment delays in the healthcare sector <sup>1</sup>.



As a result, healthcare organisations are spending an average of **£544,000** each on locum staff and overtime annually.

# 98%

Highlight negative impacts of these delays for their business due to understaffing <sup>2</sup>.

# 74%

Of respondents say implementing technology would streamline and accelerate the recruitment process <sup>3</sup>.

# 2%

Yet just 2% of the organisations they work for make use of digital recruitment tools.

<sup>1</sup>This stat excludes those who selected 'Do not think there are recruitment delays in the healthcare sector' in Q1

<sup>2</sup>This stat excludes those who selected 'N/A None' in Q5

<sup>3</sup>This statistic combines the following answer options; 'Implementing a streamlined digital application and assessment platform', 'Simple technology that both the organisation and employee can use simply', 'Expediting the Right to Work verification process using secure technology', 'Clear identity check process for new employees', 'Digital technology which protects data and confidentiality'

## Foreword

Our healthcare system is facing an acute shortage of qualified professionals. This is putting pressure on staff wellbeing and patient care, while constraining productivity and costing organisations money.

In this challenging climate, Digidentity took a temperature check of healthcare recruitment in the UK. We asked HR, staffing and senior management decision-makers how quickly they're able to fill vacancies; what the delay is; and the resulting impact.

We found that inefficient processes are delaying people starting work, and forcing organisations to spend on overtime and locum staff.

Our research highlights an urgent need for digital solutions to streamline recruitment, meet compliance obligations, and protect data privacy and security – all while putting patients first.

This is especially important in the healthcare sector, given the structure of the market. The UK healthcare sector is a complex web of public entities and private enterprises, made up of hospitals, clinics, surgeries, and other service providers. Unity is essential.

Our mission at Digidentity is to strengthen workflows, simplify processes and increase efficiency. We're passionate about helping organisations to innovate and adapt, overcome resistance to change, and unleash the power of technology to revolutionise recruitment.

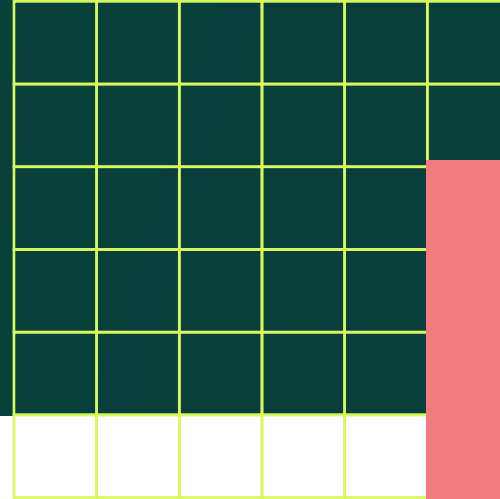
*Jonathan Evans*

*UK Country Manager, Digidentity*





# The recruitment lag



**It's no secret that the UK's healthcare sector is experiencing significant staff shortages. This is leading to overworked staff, long waiting lists and declining patient care.**

To make matters worse, recruitment delays are preventing organisations from filling vacancies efficiently. They also mean employees can't start their new jobs quickly. This is particularly damaging in an industry where professionals move frequently between roles, trusts and hospitals.

These challenges have serious repercussions. Recruitment delays and staff shortages matter for both staff, patients and the organisations themselves. By understanding the true cost of delayed time to hire staff, businesses can adapt and combat this issue.

Our survey respondents are almost unanimous in acknowledging these challenges. 97%<sup>4</sup> of healthcare decision-makers recognise that there are recruitment delays in the sector.

A similar number (98%<sup>5</sup>) say these are having a negative impact in the form of understaffing. This is hampering morale and productivity, and increasing employee turnover.

"Digidentity's latest report statistics demonstrate how healthcare professionals nationwide are grappling with an onslaught of challenges when hiring talent within Health and Social care. "This is something that we're seeing echoed across the sector. The Skills Care reports show the cost to recruit, and re-recruit, new staff works out to be £2500 per person. Onboarding and recruiting for all vacant roles added up over a two-year period within social care alone, stands at almost £5 billion pounds overall – clearly showing a major staffing and recruitment issue. "The repercussions of this struggle are felt throughout the entire health and social care system. With staff members overworked, their morale inevitably wanes, subsequently affecting the quality of patient care.

"The implementation of digital solutions designed to streamline the identification process promises to speed up the hiring process significantly. These solutions, ranging from safe, secure and digital ID checks to accelerating Right to Work verifications, streamlined DBS or qualification checks, have the potential to create a much more efficient and secure workflow.

"With ongoing innovation and the continued reassurance of the security measures in place for these digital solutions, we hope to see a brighter future for healthcare staff – which will ultimately lead to improved patient care. A mission that everyone at both ME Passport and Digidentity cares about."

**Carly Rochester**  
Director at ME Passport



<sup>4</sup> This stat excludes those who selected 'Do not think there are recruitment delays in the healthcare sector' in Q1  
<sup>5</sup> This stat excludes those who selected 'N/A None' in Q5



# Regulation Recruitment

**Recruitment takes a significant amount of time, particularly in a sector that's struggling with chronic staff shortages. But the process isn't being helped by cumbersome systems and processes for carrying out mandatory identity checks.**

From October 2022, all UK organisations should be conducting digital Right-to-Work checks when employing British and Irish citizens, using a government certified Identity Service Provider. For any non-UK or Irish passport holders, overseas recruits must use the Home Office sharecode service.

These checks take time – and are clearly causing problems. More than a third of survey participants (36%<sup>6</sup>) say their organisation lacks a clear and efficient way to carry them out.

Improved ID verification processes, up to date digital systems with staff and employer access as well as enhanced communication between organisations can help solve this challenge.

<sup>6</sup> 'Expediting the Right to Work verification process using secure technology' and 'Clear identity check process for new employees' answer options combined in Q4

## Recruitment inefficiencies: A £500 million problem



**As well as impairing productivity and morale – not to mention patient care – recruitment delays are also costing health organisations money.**

In fact, our survey uncovered a substantial financial burden. Respondents told us that they're paying almost £544,000 a year on average for locums and overtime shifts, to fill gaps in their workforces (see fig. 1).

This additional spend is particularly acute in London, where 69% say their organisation is investing between £101,000 and £1 million (compared to 68% nationally).

Looking at Greater London specifically, organisations are spending significant funds in this area. In comparison to the time spent filling positions, budgets are being spent on short term care rather than long term employees. These organisations will spend more money overall by repeatedly hiring short-term locum staff rather than investing in long-term hires.

This approach to staffing puts a plaster on the issue rather than fixing it.

It also diverts crucial resources from essential healthcare services. That's especially concerning for the NHS, where budgets are stretched so thinly.

Figure 1. Annual spend on overtime and locums

SPEND	UK	GREATER LONDON
Less than £50,000	0%	0%
£50,000–£100,000	19%	17%
£100,000–£500,000	46%	61%
£500,000–£1 million	22%	8%
£1 million–£5 million	6%	3%

Figure 2: Annual spend on overtime and locums per organisation

SPEND	99 EMPLOYEES AND UNDER	100-249 EMPLOYEES	250 EMPLOYEES AND MORE
Less than £50,000	0%	0%	0%
£50,000–£100,000	30%	18%	16%
£100,000–£500,000	50%	56%	33%
£500,000–£1 million	15%	17%	31%
£1 million–£5 million	3%	2%	14%
Unsure	3%	7%	8%



## Data protection: The tech imperative



Those working in the sector, particularly recruitment managers, HR directors and hiring managers who responded to the survey are clear that technology would help alleviate the problem.

Three quarters of survey participants (74%<sup>7</sup>) agree that digital tools would streamline and accelerate the recruitment and identity verification process.

Yet these appear to be sorely lacking. Only 2% of decision makers say their organisations currently make use of digital recruitment solutions.

### *So, what's holding back the adoption of recruitment technology?*

The biggest barrier is fear around security of personal information. Data security and protection must be paramount as healthcare organisations use digital tools to manage recruitment, and process identity checks. This is important for patients, staff and the organisation itself.

Indeed, respondents specifically highlight security as a barrier to technology deployment, behind lack of budget. Alarming, 45%<sup>8</sup> fear their Right-to-Work checks are at risk of data breaches, and need more secure systems. In addition, 36% of organisations are still looking for clear and efficient digital Right-to-Work and ID checks to streamline recruitment and don't use these tools at all. Clearly implementation is still a challenge.

Considering the decentralised nature of the UK's healthcare landscape, with hospitals and services nationwide and a web of connections between the NHS and private enterprises, the integration of digital technology holds tremendous potential for optimising operations and fostering cohesive links. With simple, accessible, secure and user-friendly solutions already available, the industry approach to this needs to change quickly, it is imperative that the industry swiftly adapts its approach.

<sup>7</sup>This statistic combines the following answer options; 'Implementing a streamlined digital application and assessment platform', 'Simple technology that both the organisation and employee can use simply', 'Expediting the Right to Work verification process using secure technology', 'Clear identity check process for new employees', 'Digital technology which protects data and confidentiality'

<sup>8</sup> Strongly agree' and 'Somewhat agree' responses combined

# The road to recovery: revolutionising recruitment

Technology and data are at the heart of a successful healthcare system. Digital tech offers huge potential to optimise operations and join up systems – not least where recruitment is concerned.

The biggest delays in healthcare recruitment can happen between a professional being offered a job and actually starting work. Inadequate verification processes are only adding to the sector's staff shortages. Improving and accelerating these processes – with digital systems, integrated data and robust security – will help to fill some of the gaps in the healthcare workforce.

The good news is that these solutions are readily available. You can reduce the pressure on your employees, by investing in accessible, intuitive and secure tools such as:



## 01. Digital recruitment platforms

streamline your recruitment with a smoother and more efficient process for employers and employees alike.

## 02. Certified Identity Service Providers (IdSPs)

simplify your identity checks by using a certified IdSP to ensure compliance with new RtW legislation.

## 03. Identity verification tools

leverage other available technologies like biometric authentication and digital signatures to improve security of personal data and meet compliance obligations.

Digital solutions which lead with a data-first approach will ensure patients, staff and organisations are protected.

Awareness of regulation is also a key issue as many organisations still need to invest in solutions that meet current compliance requirements.

## Easing the administration burden

By storing their digital identity and credentials in the Dignity Wallet, doctors can reduce the administrative burden of having to provide physical copies of their identity and qualification documents to each hospital. The administrative process is cut short, accelerating the doctor's new placement and start-date, saving time, money and effort.

## Prevent fraud

There is a risk of fraudulent activities, including identity theft and falsification of qualifications, which can put patients' and doctors' safety at risk. Dignity uses advanced encryption technology and multi-factor authentication to protect doctors' personal information and credentials from unauthorised access or tampering.

## Streamline systems

The Dignity Wallet and verifiable credentials are designed to be interoperable, which means they can be easily integrated into different hospital information systems. The lack of interoperability between different hospital information systems can make it difficult for doctors to access and share their information.

## Safe ID verification

Verifiable credentials provide a transparent and auditable way for doctors to prove their qualifications and other credentials to hospitals. Doctors can now easily prove their Right to Work status and identity without the usual non-standardised, time-consuming paper-based process.

## Scalable systems

Dignity automates the identity verification process, saving time and resources, improving accuracy and reducing errors. Dignity is designed to be scalable, making it suitable for Healthcare institutions' existing systems. Dignity's process is scalable and fully automated for convenience and security.

## Data protection

Dignity's solution offers a robust identity verification process that meets the highest standards of compliance. Dignity's solution can also be accessed online or via the app, allowing citizens to complete the verification process from anywhere which makes for a compliant and convenient customer experience. Digital identity verification protects the doctor and hospital from the risk of data breaches and unauthorised access to confidential information.

## Digital identities

Speed up ID validation (and reduce costs) with the digital identity that all permanent and locum healthcare workers require by law. All staff - permanent and locum - need a trusted digital identity that contains verified attributes such as RtW, DBS, and qualifications. This will prevent the need for the hospital to validate who they are before they join for a shift. This also alleviates the cost associated with recruitment agencies tasked at placing locum workers.





# Help at hand

Getting the investment right is essential when choosing a digital pathway in healthcare. Here are the top areas to consider when looking into digital solutions and how Digidentity can help support these choices.

Digidentity's technology has verified over 25 million individuals. Please get in touch to find out how we can help streamline your ID checks - while keeping them secure.

<https://www.digidentity.eu/get-in-touch>

## About the research

The research was conducted by Censuswide, among a sample of 250 decision makers in recruitment and HR for the healthcare sector in the UK. The data was collected between 08.09.23 - 15.09.23.

Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct which is based on the ESOMAR principles.

[www.digidentity.eu](https://www.digidentity.eu)

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