

## Executive Search Case Study - Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust recently found itself in the unusual position of having to recruit four out of six board members within 12 months.

“We used the NHS Leadership Academy Executive Search service for every one of them,” said Dawn Jarvis, Director of People and Organisational Development at the Trust. “It was an extremely professional service. I would choose it again over others because I have used it and I know it works well.”

The new posts included the Chief Executive Officer, a Chief Operating Officer, a Director of Finance and Infrastructure, and a new Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Quality. Dawn feels the NHS Executive Search service has an advantage over commercial recruitment agencies when it comes to NHS intelligence.

“With commercial recruitment agencies who approach you as a potential candidate, you sometimes feel they are just trying to beef up the numbers, but don’t really know anything about you. The NHS Leadership Academy Executive Search service has knowledge and expertise of the NHS and extensive networks of contacts. As a regular customer of the NHS service it feels to me that they really try to find out who would be the best possible fit for the Trust.”

### A thorough recruitment process

Dawn was impressed with the support offered by Martin Hancock and his team during the recruitment process for the vacant posts.

“We had a series of two-hour meetings with the team where they asked detailed questions about the vacancies, the sort of people we were looking for, the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and its ambitions,” said Dawn. “They took the time to try to understand the organisation and then drew up a summary of the meetings.

“They gave us a long list of people who could be in a position to apply and liaised with us about the list. They kept us regularly updated about how the long list was developing over time, and about who was interested in applying. The team also helped us to draw up the person spec for each role, the questions for interview and a complete recruitment pack based on their discussions with us. For a busy HR department where life is quite hectic, this support was invaluable.”

The NHS Executive Search service also helped with further long listing and short listing, and held an in-depth interview with shortlisted candidates to assess their skills and suitability for the various roles. This helped the Trust to decide which candidates should go forward to final panel interviews.

“The team also did a much more thorough de-brief with the candidates who were not successful than has been my experience with private search agencies. They met with many of the candidates to discuss how the interview process went and what they could have done better,” said Dawn.

### Getting to know candidates in depth

One of the things that impressed Richard Parker, who was appointed to the Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Quality post in June 2013, was that the NHS Executive Search team did not take anything for granted.

“I was previously in a Deputy Chief Operating Officer post at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which is a role which may not be covered by a nurse, so I was not an

obvious candidate,” said Richard. “Some private recruitment agencies would have looked at my job title and ruled me out. But the NHS search team were very thorough. I definitely felt they were much more interested in listening to what I had to say and considering me as a candidate.”

Having expressed an interest in the post Richard also felt that the service helped him with the application process:

“At the time I was considering a new post there were two Director of Nursing posts I was interested in but the other recruitment agency was not so encouraging, or so interested in my experience. That helped me to make up my mind. The feedback I was given prior to and during the various stages by the NHS service was also very helpful. It allowed me to do more targeted preparation.”

After he was shortlisted, Richard attended various meetings at the Trust, facilitated by the Executive Search service.

“I was potentially committing to a very senior job in an organisation where I would work very closely with four or five colleagues,” he said. “The meetings enabled me to get myself up to speed with the Trust and to meet the key people prior to the interviews. This is a very sensible part of the process, as it allows you to see if you will be a good fit for the team. The Executive Search service team were also sensitive to issues of confidentiality, which was important.”

### Knowledge of the NHS

Chief Executive Officer at DBH, Mike Pinkerton, who was appointed as CEO in January 2013, feels that there could be a case for using commercial services where a strong field of candidates from outside the NHS or a very unusual skillset is required, but was very satisfied with the NHS search service.

“We were very happy with the service,” said Mike. “What the team did differently was in developing their understanding of the Trust - where it was coming from and where it was going to. This enabled the candidates to make a more informed choice about whether to apply in the first place. The team was very effective in terms of their understanding of the various roles and in working hard to bring together a good field of candidates from within the NHS. It’s also important to note that candidates from outside the NHS were still attracted into the process, so all the angles were covered.”

Dawn Jarvis said she would not hesitate to use the NHS service in future.

“The recruitment process was very thorough and worked exceptionally well,” she said. “The fact that the service gets you the results you want but also helps to keep scarce resources within the NHS is an important driver for me. We had a very positive experience of the service and I would trust the team to do a good job in future.”