



FURTHER EDUCATION RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

**NORTHERN SKILLS NETWORK
ROUNDTABLE – OCTOBER 2023**

On the 4th October 2023, the Northern Skills Network held their second Further Education (FE) Recruitment and Retention roundtable, facilitated by Alex Miles and Charlotte Jones. The focus of the session was to understand if the same challenges still prevail surrounding FE Recruitment and Retention.

[Click here to download the summary from the first NSN FE Recruitment Roundtable held earlier in 2023.](#)

Alex Miles, opened the session and detailed the key priorities for NSN as detailed in the manifesto published in early 2023 – [click here to read the manifesto.](#)

Attendees welcomed input from Sak Awan, Director of Employability and Skills at S Knights Recruitment on “Securing and retaining the best staff within a competitive market”. Sak talked through some candidate market insights around:

- Salary Expectation
- Motivators and Drivers
- Stop Gaps
- Talent Leaving the Sector
- Attracting Talent from Sectors
- Juggling Between Recruiting and Work



Sak also detailed the opportunity, narrative and audience that providers should be considering when recruiting and highlighted some great practical tips including “decide who you are and run with it” and “protect your candidate journey – perception from day 1”.

Sak shared the common reasons for employees choosing to leave, and almost all of them could be resolved by providers looking at recruitment, selection, and CPD in a more strategic and less reactive way. He also mentioned that reason for leaving being “more challenge” is not a real reason, it is a ask for more from the existing employer.

NSN and S Knights Recruitment will be continuing the discussion to establish any collaborative working opportunities for the FE Sector.

For more information on S Knights Recruitment, get in touch:

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Discussion

The discussion included identifying top challenges:

- Industry vs. Education – pay disparity
- Lack of funding (not just for salaries/funding bands etc. but for low cost programmes that could support FE recruitment)
- Understanding new technologies
- The challenge of finding industry experts that want to teach
- Key sectors that are impacted e.g. engineering and construction
- CEIAG – promoting the FE sector as a career at pre and post 16

The following areas were identified as bringing the most challenge:

- Engineering / Electrical (TOP)
- New technologies / embracing higher level tech
- Construction – especially plumbing.

100% of attendees stated that without solutions to the current FE Recruitment and Retention crisis, they anticipate this would impact their curriculum offer in the future.

Best practice was also discussed including reference to East Kent College who are putting industry staff on their Level 5 apprenticeship and then utilising them as hourly paid lecturers. which has reduced their staff vacancies. NSN will get in touch with East Kent College to find out more information in order to share best practice across The North. The best practice discussion continued and Alex updated the group on a blog that was produced jointly between NSN and Kendal College focused on how they worked with a local NHS Trust to collaborate on a joined up approach to meeting local skills needs within the NHS. [Click here to read more.](#)

The potential to link in with industry was discussed including:

- Identifying those looking at a staged retirement, these people may be considering reducing to 3 days e.g. lecturing at a HEI... how can we get them to come into FE?
- Working with local Chamber of Commerces to establish partnerships for collaboration

Next Steps

NSN will take away the ideas from the roundtable to establish how these can be picked up across the North. Raising the profile of FE Careers will be considered as part of the Northern Careers Conference that is due to take place in February 2023 in partnership with UCAS and The Careers and Enterprise Company.

NSN will hold a further FE Recruitment and Retention Roundtable early in 2024 to ensure this important discussion is continued, but in the meantime if you have any questions or would like a further chat get in touch:

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