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Counter Fraud Authority

# Imposters/Impersonating a Medical Professional

NHS fraud prevention quick guide

June 2026

V1.0



Working together to **find**, **report** and **stop** NHS fraud

The NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) has identified a rising fraud trend involving individuals impersonating medical professionals. This risk is particularly high among frontline temporary workers, i.e. bank and agency staff (nursing and health care assistants) but also substantive employees.

In these cases, someone registers with a bank or agency, passes all ID and qualification checks, and books shifts, only for a different person to show up and work. In some cases, individuals are registered across multiple agencies and are booked onto multiple shifts. This risk is similar within cases of substantive employment where the recruitment process is followed by an individual and accepts a position, but another unknown person begins the role.

NHS organisations depend on agencies to verify identity, qualifications, and right to work status, but on-site ID checks can often fail. Fraudsters are known to exploit this in various ways, for example by arriving late or by pressuring staff to skip verification. This poses serious patient safety risks, as unqualified individuals may deliver healthcare that they are not trained for.

It exposes NHS organisations to financial loss and reputational damage. Furthermore, an imposter working in an NHS environment creates the risk of an information governance breach. The false worker would have access to patient records which could then be used to gather personal information for other fraudulent activity.

While NHS organisations may outsource workforce and staffing functions to agencies, this does not transfer the underlying risk. Responsibility for managing and mitigating those risks remains with the NHS organisation.

## Who is this quick guide for?

This quick guide is intended for all operational NHS staff, recruitment and temporary workforce teams and teams that use bank and agency staff. Senior staff and the executive team should be briefed on the risks and provide assurance to staff that they will support them when needed.

## Prevention advice

This section outlines recommended prevention measures that can help mitigate the risk of imposters at NHS organisations.

### Imposters on fraud/corporate risk register

- Ensure that the risk, including appropriate and proportionate mitigation, of imposters and patient safety concerns are accurately captured with the NHS organisation's risk register.

## Working with Framework agencies

- NHS organisations should adhere to NHS England’s guidance [‘Agency Rules’](#) with suggested measures to improve assurance and quality in agency spend.
- When contracting staff from an agency or other external third-party provider, NHS organisations must assure themselves (usually through robust auditing) that the agency, bank, or temporary staffing provider, carries out pre-employment checks in compliance with the organisation’s own recruitment policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), as well as [NHS Employers’ NHS Employment Check Standards](#). The fraud risk increases if NHS organisations are using off framework agencies as framework agencies provide assurance regarding their due diligence.
- The NHS Employers’ six NHS Employment Check Standards outline the type and level of checks employers must carry out before recruiting staff into NHS positions. The Standards require NHS organisations to verify an individual’s identity using original, authoritative identity documents, such as government-issued photographic identification, as part of pre-employment checking process. These checks are intended to confirm that an individual is who they claim to be and form the foundation of all other employment checks.
- Some NHS organisations have chosen to introduce additional local controls, agreed with their agency providers, to support assurance that the individual attending for duty is the person expected. This may include the use of supplementary information provided by the agency to support local verification on arrival. Any such arrangements should be proportionate and managed in line with local information governance requirements.

## Temporary staff induction

NHS organisations should consider implementing an organisational policy, SOP, and action card, to ensure a consistent approach is applied when onboarding temporary staff. Temporary workforce teams, human resources (HR), nursing and other NHS managers should be consulted as part of this process.

- Organisational policy should clearly set out the responsibilities of temporary workforce teams, human resource team, matrons, ward managers, and any other relevant staff.
- In line with NHS Employers NHS Employment Check Standards, photographic ID must be required by the temporary worker when they arrive to work a shift.

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It should be inspected by the ward or department manager, nurse in charge, or another authorised senior staff member, and the details compared with those provided by the agency.

- Identity documents should be examined in line with the Cabinet Office and Government Digital Service's ['Good Practice Guide'](#), which helps employers decide how to check someone's identity as well as the Home Office's ['Guidance on examining identity documents 2025'](#), which helps to detect basic forgeries in identity documents.
- Identity documents should be cross checked against any supporting information provided by the agency ensuring all the details match.
- Ensure that the booking information, date of birth, gender and other salient information matches the person presenting for the shift.
- In line with NHS Employers Standards, employers should take a photocopy or a scanned copy of each of the original documents presented to them and retain these on file in line with current data protection law.
- The booking reference number should be confirmed by the person attending for shift and cross referenced with that held by the ward/department.
- All relevant checks (i.e. ID, booking information, and reference) should be recorded as complete and held on file.
- Temporary workers should be dressed appropriately in their uniform where one has been issued by the agency or bank.
- Be alert to temporary workers arriving late as this tactic is often used to avoid the ID checks due to the urgency of getting staff on the ward/handover.
- NHS organisations should have escalation arrangements in place to support staff in the event of an incident. This should be part of an overall policy and communicated to all staff.
- If there are concerns around identity and escalation is required, NHS organisations should ensure there is an approved process to ensure the correct steps are taken promptly and evidence is obtained and retained to allow for enforcement action. The following actions should be considered:
  - Any incidents should be reported immediately to the NHS organisation's security manager, Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS), risk manager, temporary workforce team, and/or HR.

- CCTV footage should be secured at the earliest opportunity.
- Photocopy/scanned copy of ID should be secured.
- Make a note of any patients the alleged imposter may have treated or engaged with, to support safeguarding reports.

## Recruitment of substantive staff

- Thorough ID and vetting checks should be undertaken to ensure the person being interviewed is who they claim to be in line with NHS Employers standards.
- The ID of the individual who then begins the role should also be checked on the first day of the job and corroborated against the recruitment records and ID provided on the application.

## Employee management

- Immediate action should be taken to protect patient safety if someone is suspected of being an imposter and escalation to the senior member of the nursing team/manager on call. The NHS organisation's LCFS should be notified.
- Indicators of potential impersonation may include a temporary worker being withdrawn, declining to undertake expected duties (especially clinical duties), or attempting to avoid or delay identity verification.
- Managers should be vigilant for any poor performance and attempts to evade their duties and discussions with management.
- Be alert to agency staff consistently working night shifts or unsociable hours as these circumstances may attract less oversight.

## Wider concerns

- In some cases, there is the potential for organised crime groups to be in control of vulnerable people who are forced to work agency shifts. The individual may also be forced into facilitating this type of fraud.
- There are significant risks of potential human trafficking and modern slavery as the identity of the person undertaking the work is unknown. If modern slavery is suspected, immediate action should be taken in accordance with the NHS organisation's modern slavery statement. More information on modern slavery indicators can be found [here](#).

## If you suspect fraud

If fraud is suspected the organisation's escalation process should be followed immediately and the LCFS contacted for advice (see how to report fraud below).

If you suspect modern slavery, report it to [the Modern Slavery Helpline](#) on 08000 121 700 or the police on 101. In an emergency always call 999. Don't leave it to someone else. Your information could save a life.

## How to report fraud

Report any suspicions of fraud to the [NHS Counter Fraud Authority](#) online or through the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line on **0800 028 4060** (powered by Crimestoppers). All reports are treated in confidence, and you have the option to report anonymously. You can also report fraud to your nominated LCFS.

Details of your LCFS [ADD DETAILS]

- Organisation name:
- Name:
- Job Title:
- Email:
- Telephone:
- Mobile:
- Address:



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