

# International Recruitment to the Community

# CASE STUDY

2022/#1



## Interview with Esther Mwangi, Area Nursing Manager –Community Nursing International Recruitment Advisor NHS England NHS Improvement

I trained in Kenya at the University of Eastern Africa, and this was the first University in East Africa that offered a degree in nursing. I graduated in 1997 with a BSc in Nursing and following a year’s internship rotation programme was registered by the Nursing Council of Kenya as a Kenya Registered Community Health Nurse (KRCHN). This degree and registration qualified me to work as a midwife, mental health nurse, children’s nurse, or adult nurse.

Whilst I was working in Kenya, I became aware that Cambridge University Hospitals were recruiting for nurses to work in the UK. So I applied for the job and had a telephone interview and was offered a Band D (equivalent to Band 5) post in the Day Surgery Unit. The whole recruitment process took about 8 months and I moved to the UK in 2000. I was predominantly carrying out children’s pre op assessments which were very complex, so my experience working at this level was recognised and my Band D post escalated two points on the D scale. A year later, I applied and successfully was given an E grade post.

Eventually I decided I wanted to work with adults and even though I did not know anything about District Nursing I was aware that the patients they visited were predominately adults living in their own homes, so I

decided to turn my attention to community nursing. I now had a car, so I was able to travel to locations. I spoke to a couple of community teams that were advertising for nurses to join their teams and arranged to visit them. I knew that I needed support, as community nursing required more independent thought and autonomy so when I was offered a D grade job with a very supportive team I accepted this and learnt so much.

After a year, I applied for the District Nurse Specialist Practice Qualification (DNSPQ) course at Anglia Ruskin University, and I enjoyed every minute of this course. Once qualified I was given a District Nurse post and after a while I applied for a Clinical Lead role as a Band 7. Having come from a country where career opportunities are limited, I realised that in this role I could support others to develop to maximise their potential. I subsequently went on to gain a PG Diploma in Primary and Community Care and in 2021 I successfully achieved a Masters’ Degree in Advanced Clinical Practice.

Having come from a country where career opportunities are limited, I realised that in this role I could support others to develop to maximise their potential.



Above: Esther Mwangi

My aim had initially been to work in the UK and spend time with my sisters who were also living here and then return to Kenya after two years. However, after spending time in the community I realised that this was where I wanted to specialise, so my post in Kenya was released, and I stayed in the UK. I recognised that there was a lot of support for internationally recruited nurses in the UK and this was an incentive to remain here.

My key learning points as an internationally recruited nurse is to be open minded. You might leave your country with clear aims, but you must be open about exploring what is on offer in the UK and in the NHS. I have availed of many opportunities offered to me. It is important to find an area of work that you enjoy as you will then give it your best.

In 2020 I was offered a secondment into the Chief Nursing Officer for England's team as a Nurse Fellow

and this has been a real turning point in my life. It was an eye opener for me to look at the various ways I could use my skills. During this time, I set up the first National Decision-Making Council for Community Nursing (SPDMC); this council enables the voice of nurses at point of care to influence national policy in the CNO team to improve patient care.

I am currently International Recruitment Advisor for Community Nursing at NHSEI. I feel that my career progression is the exception rather than the rule for the internationally recruited (IR) nurses who came to the UK many years ago. Fortunately, now IR nurses are offered a preceptor programme, they are given guidance on career progression and directed to appropriate courses to assist their personal and professional development. Annual appraisals are performed so an IR nurse can have the opportunity to share their prior experience and their aspirations for their own professional development.

You might leave your country with clear aims, but you must be open about exploring what is on offer in the UK and in the NHS.

