

# International Recruitment to the Community CASE STUDY

2022/#2



## Interview with Francis Fernando, Associate Director of Nursing, Community and Mental Health Trust (North East London Foundation Trust)

In January 2022 I moved to a Community and Mental Health Trust (North East London Foundation Trust) as an Associate Director of Nursing. Previously I was Head of Nursing in the North Division of Central London Community Health Trust.

I have been a nurse for 30 years and I came to the UK in May 2000. I was one of the first internationally recruited nurses to work in Salisbury. Whilst I was working in the spinal unit in the Philippines, Drake International were recruiting nurses to come to work in the UK. I, and many others were interviewed face to face by a British panel consisting of representatives from the agency and by chief nurses from England. There was, and there still is an overproduction of qualified nurses in the Philippines so ethically this is not a problem, as it gives other nurses the opportunity to gain employment. When I left the Philippines, 42 of us were recruited to the UK and 6 or 7 are still working in Salisbury as they have established networks and families in the area. The process from interview to coming to England was only 3 months. During the adaption programme we were all supported by an excellent IR facilitator. The adaptation course took me 3 months.

Internationally recruited nurses coming to work in the UK now are provided with an orientation into their place of work; this introduces them to policies and governance

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structures. They are also provided with a preceptor who will support them as they transfer their skills to work in the NHS. When I first arrived in the UK this support was not available and there were very few role models who had been internationally recruited. There was one nurse from the Caribbean, and she had been working in the Trust for 30 years, so by default she became my role model. There was no offer of coaching or mentoring to prepare me for interviews, so I had to be proactive in seeking assistance with this. I saw these obstacles as a challenge and overcame them by speaking to the Chief Nurse and the Directorate Senior Nurse (now called Matron) as I wanted them to support me.

Once I was registered with the NMC I worked on a spinal unit as a Band 5 and quickly moved to a Band 6. I was asked to act up as a Band 7 for a period of almost a year and after this I applied for a permanent Band 7 role. I applied for a Band 7 position four times in the same Trust and was unsuccessful. Fortunately, my Directorate Senior Nurse pointed me in the right direction when a Band 7 post in the Orthopaedics Department became vacant and I was successful in getting my first Band 7 post.

From this experience I learnt that it was important to prepare for interviews and to sell myself. I did not initially have these skills, so I had some coaching. I was the first Filipino nurse to work as a Band 7 in Salisbury at that time. After working for five years at Band 7, I moved from Salisbury to Surrey where I was appointed as a Nurse Consultant for Falls and Safety.

These challenges have made me more resilient and since coming to the UK I am a better nurse, better person, and a better communicator. My learning in the Philippines provided excellent clinical skills, but the UK has offered me skills in reflection, critical thinking, experiential learning, innovation and improvement all of

which have enhanced my nursing knowledge and skills. As a result of a 360-degree feedback I am now a more active listener and I am more visible with all members of the workforce, not just my senior colleagues.

As a result of this my key learning would be to seek out a mentor or coach earlier. I would make myself more familiar with the systems and processes within the organisation and become more aware of policies impacting on the NHS and Health & Social Care. I would also take some risks and put myself in a position where I could assist myself and others to climb the professional career ladder.

I initially moved to the UK for career progression and to provide a better future for my family and to create a good work life balance, which I have achieved. I have been able to attend courses such as the Ready Now Leadership programme by the National Leadership academy which has given me the confidence to apply for senior roles within the NHS.

I am very proactive with the Filipino Nurses Association UK <https://www.fnauk.org.uk> which I established in

July 2020 during a Covid-19 pandemic when Filipino healthcare professionals were disproportionately dying from Covid-19. I wish I had done this earlier, however I have managed to match around 157 Filipino Nurses with mentors and coaches in and out of the NHS, some are Professors, Chief Executives and many have other senior roles. Feedback from this group of nurses has shown that a fifth of the nurses have been promoted since having the mentorship/coaching programme. Had I not sought some coaching prior to my first Band 7 role I would not have been successful at interview.

If I was to offer any advice to newly recruited international nurses coming to the UK. I would recommend that they communicate with the IR lead in their area as soon as possible so that they can assist with issues such as helping them to register with a GP, open a bank account and to advise them about accommodation. I would recommend that they seek out the National Nurses Association for their respective country as this will help them settle and gain earlier integration into the community. I would also encourage them to express their wishes for career progression and CPD needs when they have their annual appraisal.

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