

Talent Sharing for Norfolk and Suffolk's Engineering and Manufacturing Cluster

New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (NAAME) and the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor (CNTC) have secured funding from New Anglia LEP for a major new project called Engineering Success to support the manufacturing and engineering sector across Norfolk and Suffolk. A key component of this project is to develop a mechanism for businesses to share workforce.

Developing successful engineering and manufacturing clusters across Norfolk and Suffolk is reliant on businesses having access to and retaining skilled workers.

As with many other industries in the region, engineering and manufacturing businesses are facing challenges in terms of:

- **Recruiting new talent** to the industry;
- **Replacing an aging workforce** and potentially replacing EU workers as the UK leaves the EU;
- **Upskilling the existing workforce** in light of change factors, including increased digitisation and automation;
- **Seasonality of workforce requirements.** Several engineering and manufacturing businesses experience a high level of fluctuation in workforce requirements across the year with workers potentially sitting idle for part of the year.
- **Increased costs and complexity of using contractors.** With IR32 coming into effect next year, using contract workers may become more expensive for businesses and less attractive for individuals, potentially resulting in a smaller pool of temporary workforce.

The concept of the Talent Sharing Platform originated through NAAME and was identified as a means of sharing staff between firms in a way that is beneficial for both businesses and employees.

Although formal talent sharing schemes are not widely deployed in the UK, these types of arrangements are recognised as an official form of employment in countries including Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, etc. A major study from across Europe can be found [here](#).

In light of the current Covid-19 crisis, the ability to safely share workforce across companies will help businesses retain existing employees as the situation returns to 'normal' and reduce the risk to businesses in taking on new employees. It will also be an opportunity for employees to work more flexibly across different companies across the region.

Types of talent sharing

There are several different models for workforce and talent sharing utilised in different industries and countries. For the purposes of this exercise, two models have been suggested as potential options:

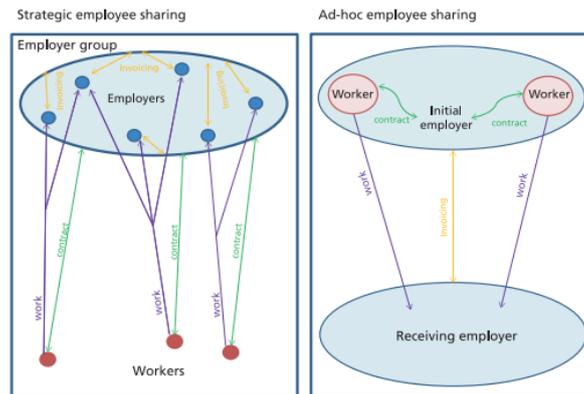
Ad-hoc employee sharing

This is essentially a pre-agreed secondment of employees between businesses. An employer that temporarily cannot provide work for its staff sends them to work at another company. The employment contract between the initial employer and the worker is maintained while the worker is incorporated into the work organisation of the receiving employer. The structure is similar to temporary agency work, with the difference that the initial employer is not in the business of placing

people in work, and the intention is that the placement is temporary and the worker will return to work with the initial employer. This type of ad-hoc employee sharing can be pre-agreed between a small number of businesses giving the employee a level of certainty over their working arrangements.

Strategic employee sharing

Strategic employee sharing occurs when a group of employers form a network that hires one or several workers to be sent on individual work assignments with the participating employer companies. The structure is like temporary agency work, with the difference that the workers regularly rotate among the participating employers and work exclusively for these employers.



Potential benefits of talent sharing

Some of the main benefits that have been observed in talent sharing schemes across Europe include¹:

- + The employment risk is shared among the member companies.
- + Companies can maintain access to staff and expertise, even when there is insufficient work in an individual organisation to justify full-time employment
- + Participating companies also benefit from the cross-company work experience of the shared worker, which might result in efficiency and productivity gains.
- + This can also make a region more attractive to skilled workers, who might otherwise move elsewhere. Working in different companies could also create a pool of workers with a broader range of competencies, and hence deliver regional upskilling.

What next

The aim of the Talent Sharing Platform is to address some of the challenges faced by the engineering and manufacturing industry and the platform therefore needs to be led by those companies in the region that it is intended to benefit to ensure it is fit for purpose. The Tech Corridor and NAAME will therefore set up a Special Interest Group (SIG) to develop the Talent Sharing Platform and we are looking for a maximum of 10 individuals to join this group for a series of roundtable meetings to shape the scheme and ongoing input into its functionality.

All NAAME members will be consulted throughout the development of the Talent Sharing Platform and any members interested in utilising the platform are encouraged to get in touch.

For more information and to register your interest, please contact Linn Clabburn on

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¹ https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef1461en.pdf