

Briefing for Joint City and County Health Scrutiny Committee: December 2015

CURRENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS FOR NURSES AND NURSING

1.0 Impact of nurse staffing shortages and vacancy levels in the NHS

- 1.1 The RCN remains concerned about nurse staffing shortages and vacancy levels across the range of NHS provision and particularly in acute hospital services – such as A&E, critical care and older people’s care – and the potential for this to have an adverse impact on patient care experience and outcomes and on the workloads, wellbeing and morale of nursing staff.
- 1.2 Research¹ by *HSJ* reported in November 2015 shows that 92% of acute hospitals in England did not achieve planned staffing levels for registered nurses working during the day; 81% also missed their night shift registered nurse staffing target.
- 1.3 Research² by the RCN in October 2015 also shows that 59% of nurses say they are too busy to provide the level of patient care they would like, with 43% reporting an increase in the number of patients they are being asked to care for.
- 1.4 Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust’s most recent quarterly staff survey³, as reported to the Trust’s Board in October 2015, reveals a decline in the proportion of staff who would recommend NUH as a place to work. Staffing and work pressures were cited among the more negative comments by staff.
- 1.5 The RCN welcomes the interim inclusion of nursing on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) following intervention by the Home Secretary in October 2015. This decision should help cushion the impact of the current shortage in the supply of UK-trained nurses because it means that the requirement for nurses recruited from outside the European Economic Area to earn at least £35,000 a year to qualify for indefinite leave to remain after six years no longer applies to anyone in a nursing role who would otherwise have had to leave the UK. The interim decision applies until February 2016, when the Migration Advisory Committee will report on its review of whether nursing should stay on the SOL list thereafter.

¹ ‘Exclusive: Fewer than one in 10 hospitals meet their own nurse staffing targets’ – *HSJ*, 16 November 2015 (based on NHS Choices data analysis)

² RCN Employment Survey conducted by Labour Research Department on behalf of the Royal College of Nursing. A stratified random sample of the RCN membership was surveyed. 4,137 responses were received.

³ Staff Survey Feedback Q2 15-16 – Report to NUH Board, 29 October 2015

1.6 We remain concerned, nonetheless, about the acute sector's ability to cope with demand as it approaches winter 2015/16 against a backdrop of cutbacks in spending on social care and community health services – access to which helps to avoid unnecessary hospital admission – as well as the shortage of permanent NHS nursing staff and the impact of the recently-implemented cap on agency nursing staff spending by NHS organisations.

2.0 Pay and morale issues in the nursing workforce

2.1 Research⁴ by the RCN in October 2015 shows that the experience of five years of pay restraint in the public sector is taking its toll on NHS nursing staff, their living standards and morale.

2.2 53% of RCN members who responded to this survey said they work extra hours to earn money for the purposes of paying bills and meeting everyday living expenses, whilst 32% said they work additional night or weekend shifts to help pay bills and meet the costs of living.

2.3 Almost third of all respondents (31%) were seeking a new job, and nearly a quarter were looking to leave health care completely. Consequently, fewer than half (45%) said they would recommend nursing as a career and 29% said they do not feel nursing will offer them a secure job in the future.

2.4 Increasingly, our members are reporting feeling overworked and undervalued.

2.5 In addition, a survey⁵ of more than 2,000 British adults commissioned by the RCN found that only 13% believe that nurses' current salaries reflect the level of skills needed for the job. Furthermore, 76% believe that nurses are paid too little and 46% say they would be willing to pay extra in income tax to go directly towards nurses' salaries.

3.0 Local authority public health grant 2015/16 in-year savings

3.1 The RCN opposed the Government's plans to reduce local authority public health grant allocations by 6.2% in-year in 2015/16. We are disappointed that

⁴ RCN Employment Survey conducted by Labour Research Department on behalf of the Royal College of Nursing. A stratified random sample of the RCN membership was surveyed. 4,137 responses were received.

⁵ ComRes interviewed 2,014 British adults aged 18+ online between 30 October and 1 November 2015. Data were weighted to be nationally representative of all British adults aged 18+ by age, gender and region. ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

a universal 6.2% savings requirement⁶ has been imposed on local authority commissioners.

- 3.2 We are concerned about the impact of reduced availability of preventative public health services, such as school nursing and nurse-led stop-smoking and weight management initiatives, both on people who manage their conditions with support from these services and on increasing potentially-avoidable demand on other parts of the NHS.

4.0 Nursing and Midwifery Council Revalidation process

- 4.1 The Nursing and Midwifery Council, the nursing regulator in the UK, recently confirmed that a new registration and assurance process called Revalidation will apply to registered nurses and midwives from April 2016.
- 4.2 Replacing the Prep standards, Revalidation will be the way in which registrants demonstrate to the NMC that they continue to practise safely and professionally and are eligible to remain on the register.
- 4.3 As the professional body for nursing, the RCN, nationally and regionally, is helping registered nurses and midwives to prepare for the introduction of Revalidation via information and resources on a dedicated website and at face-to-face awareness events.
- 4.4 Nottingham CityCare Partnership, the community health provider in Nottingham City, and GP practices in north Nottinghamshire are among the employers with whom we are working to deliver Revalidation sessions for the registered nurses they employ.
- 4.5 In addition, Health Education East Midlands has also organised a series of half-day workshops on revalidation for NMC registrants, irrespective of whether or not they work in the NHS, between November 2015 and May 2016.

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⁶ Local authority public health grant allocations 2015/16 – Government response to public consultation on in-year savings, November 2015