

Shortage of consultant paediatricians in the UK

Consultant demand by nation

Latest data show that there are 3997 whole time equivalent (WTE) paediatric consultants in the UK.^[1] We estimate that an additional 856 WTE consultants would be needed to meet demand.

We use expert-agreed standards on general paediatrics, neonatal, paediatric intensive care and community child health to

determine how many consultants would be needed to deliver safe and quality care.

There is a high level of less than full time working in paediatrics (around 22%). Therefore, it is important to note that the headcount numbers of doctors required is higher than the WTE.

Nation	Consultants (WTE)	Demand for consultants (WTE)	Consultant shortage (WTE)	% increase needed
England	3384	4026	642	19%
Scotland	324	406	82	25%
Wales	176	249	73	41%
Northern Ireland	113	172	59	52%
UK	3997	4853	856	21%

How do we calculate demand?

The methodology we have used estimates demand for consultants in five different areas of paediatrics: general, neonatal, intensive care, community child health and other paediatric subspecialties. Aggregates of the result are used to reach an overall total consultant demand figure.

The calculations produce a demand figure

in terms of WTE (whole time equivalent) and recognises that some consultant roles will cover different branches of paediatrics, especially general and community child health.

To calculate consultant demand, we use standards that outline best practice in paediatric care, including the RCPCH *Facing*

the *Future standards*,^[2] which state there should be 12-hour consultant presence seven days a week in inpatient units. In addition, we use the British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) standards,^[3] which state that there should be 8 consultants per

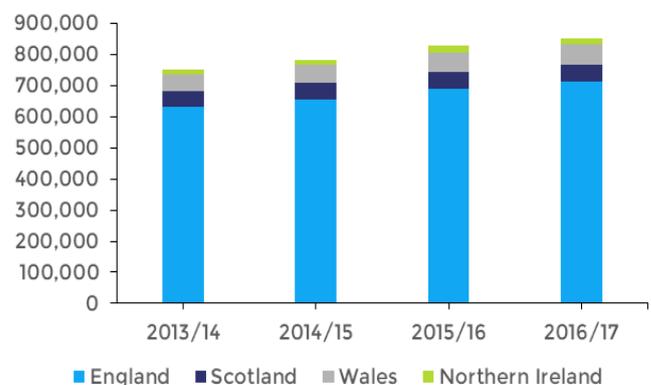
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), and the RCPCH *Covering all Bases* report^[4] which calculated demand for consultants in community child health (CCH) on the basis of population and referrals.

Why is demand increasing?

Increasing workforce demand is driven by a range of factors:

- Emergency admissions.** Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, emergency admissions in England rose 12.7%, from 631500 to 711805.^[5] In Scotland, over the same period, emergency admissions rose 13.4%, from 49370 to 55989.^[6] In Wales, emergency admissions rose 17.2%, from 54627 to 64002.^[7] And in Northern Ireland, emergency admissions rose 17.8% from 17762 to 20922.^[8] (See Figure 1).
- Double rotas.** The level of admissions seen in some units mean that double rotas are increasingly needed. This means that two consultants are on-call at the same time due to workload.
- Consultant resident cover.** The College's 2017 *Facing the Future Audit*^[9] showed that only 48% of children admitted to the paediatric department with an acute medical problem are seen by a consultant paediatrician within 14 hours of admission. Our estimate therefore calculates demand in general paediatrics based on providing consultant resident cover for 12 hours per day and seven days a week.
- Consultant-led care.** NHS England data show that paediatrics compliance with the standard for first consultant review within 14 hours is one of the lowest among medical specialties.^[10]

Figure 1. Number of finished admission episodes (FAE) in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for emergency admissions in paediatrics, 2013-14 to 2016-17.



- Neonatal demand.** Not all NICUs meet the British Association of Paediatric Medicine (BAPM) standard^[3] stating that NICUs should have separate rotas. In 2017, 89.9% of NICUs had a separate tier 3 (consultant) rota compared to 92.6% in 2015.
- Community Child Health demand.** In 2017, the RCPCH and the British Association for Community Child Health (BACCH) published *Covering all Bases*^[4] which found that there was a need for substantial increase in the community child health medical workforce. This is necessary to meet the current and anticipated demand due to a rising number of co-morbidities, long delays in diagnosis for autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and growing safeguarding concerns.

Further information about how we have calculated and estimated demand numbers for the paediatric consultant workforce can be found in *Census Resources* on our website.^[11]

References

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3. British Association of Perinatal Medicine, *Service Standards for Hospitals Providing Neonatal Care*. 2010, British Association of Perinatal Medicine: London. <https://www.bapm.org/resources/service-standards-hospitals-providing-neonatal-care-3rd-edition-2010>
4. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and British Association for Community Child Health, *Covering all bases - Community Child Health: A paediatric workforce guide*. 2017. <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/covering-all-bases-community-child-health-paediatric-workforce-guide>
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7. Patient Episode Database for Wales (PEDW), *Wales admissions by health board and specialty*. accessed 2018: <http://www.infoandstats.wales.nhs.uk/page.cfm?orgid=869&pid=40977>.
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11. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. Workforce census 2017 resources. 2019; Available from: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/workforce-census-2017-resources>.