

Migration Advisory Committee call for evidence – partial review shortage occupation list – nurses

RCPCH Response

22nd December 2015

General Comments

The main areas of concern for this College are shortages of specialist nurses working in paediatric intensive care units (PICU) and neonatal intensive care units (NICU). For NICUs, the shortages and issues are raised thoroughly in the recent Bliss Baby Report 2015 referred to below. Paediatric rotas are under increasing pressure – our Rota Compliance and Vacancy Survey 2015 highlights 19.5% middle grade vacancies (www.rcpch.ac.uk/rotas). With gaps and vacancies amongst paediatric trainees, employing advanced paediatric and neonatal nurses is part of the solution to provide safe care which was proposed by the RCPCH in its' standards document Facing the Future in 2011 (<http://www.rcpch.ac.uk/improving-child-health/better-nhs-children/service-standards-and-planning/facing-future-standards-ac>). However, we are aware that the number of specialist courses for these nurses are few and currently insufficient to meet potential demand.

A further problem is that the UK has specific children's nursing registration and there are very few courses now on offer for adult nurses or those who enter from abroad with generic registration to undertake second registration course to get on to the children's nursing register. The number of commissioned funding places should be available in England from HEE.

We are not in a position to respond to questions 12-16.

Demand for nurses

1. What are the overall trends in recruitment of foreign (EEA and non-EEA) born nurses in recent years?

RCPCH Response

The RCPCH is not actively involved in compiling data on nurse recruitment but is aware that since the publication of the Francis report and new safe staffing guidance, demand has grown rapidly and cannot be met by current home production. HSJ has covered these issues extensively and in June 2015 reported that the "The scale of the national nursing shortage in the UK last year prompted more than 100 trusts to recruit more than 5,700 nurses from overseas in the 12 months to September 2014.

2. What are the factors driving current demand for non-EEA nurses? Are these factors temporary or more structural?

RCPCH Response

Drivers for overall demand are as per answer to question 1 plus the need to meet and maintain standards such as those produced by BAPM for neonatal care. These are structural, but previous reductions in nurse training could be perceived as a temporary factor which has driven up demand for overseas nurses because of lack of supply from home grown sources.

Health Education England have produced data that shows that recruitment demand has consistently outstripped predicted demand in recent years.

3. What has been the impact, if any, of the monthly limit on RCoS allocation being reached? Have you had any RCoS applications rejected? If so, how many and what have you done to address your vacancies?

RCPCH Response

Not applicable to RCPCH

Supply of nurses

4. What are the challenges faced in recruiting nurses generally? Why is this?

RCPCH Response

The report by Bliss in October (Bliss 2015 Bliss baby report 2015; hanging in the balance, England) highlighted a number of issues around neonatal units. This included their research that three-quarters of neonatal units have unfilled vacancies equating to an estimated 650 nursing vacancies at neonatal units across England.

NHS Employers survey in 2014 has shown that 83% of NHS organisations surveyed had nursing workforce supply shortages.

A further problem highlighted by the Bliss Baby report is that neonatal services are not allocated enough money to meet national standards. It also highlights that the proportion of nurses with specialist qualifications has fallen by 19% since their earlier report of 2010 “the Chance of a Lifetime”

Access to appropriate postgraduate training to achieve high level of competencies to care for sick and vulnerable babies is a major problem with units having difficulty being able to release nurses from their frontline duties for training.

A further issue is that recruitment to specialist nursing such as neonatal and children’s nursing has been at the expense of general nursing (robbing Peter to pay Paul) which has exacerbated pressures.

5. If there is a national shortage of nurses, the relative pay of nurses would be expected to rise. Has this happened? If not, why not?

RCPCH Response

We do not understand the relevance of this question and have no access to evidence of this issue. Given that NHS nurse pay is determined nationally and has set pay scales, we would expect the impact of market forces to be minimal.

6. What are the issues around retention of nurses?

RCPCH Response

In regard to specialist nurses, shortages tend to lead to qualified nurses gravitating towards high profile, specialist centres away perhaps from where they have been trained and their service is needed.

Other issues are covered in the HEE report referred to under 8a below.

7. Do some areas of the UK experience a shortage of nurses while others do not? If so, what are some areas doing that others are not?

RCPCH Response

The RCPCH does not maintain data on this but is aware from the NHS Employers Survey (2014) NHS Qualified Nurse Supply and Demand Survey which shows a range of vacancies in English regions between 6-18%.

8. Information about trained nurses not working in the profession:

a) To what extent are there qualified nurses of working age, resident in the UK, who are not working in the profession?

RCPCH Response

HEE report "Growing Nursing Numbers Literature review on nurses leaving the NHS"
<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Nurses%20leaving%20practice%20-%20Literature%20Review.pdf> contains considerable detail covering these themes

b) If there are significant numbers of trained and/or registered nurses not working in the profession, what are the reasons behind this?

RCPCH Response

As per 8a

c) What is being done to attract these back to the profession?
How does supply and demand for nurses vary by specialty?

RCPCH Response

The College does not have sufficient information to provide a response to this question.

9. Are there specific nursing specialties that are held to be in particular shortage?

RCPCH Response

As mentioned above, neonatal nursing is in particular shortage for both those with and without specialist postgraduate qualifications.

10. What are these and what evidence is there for shortage?

RCPCH Response

Refer again to the findings in the Bliss Baby Report 2015; hanging in the balance.

Sensible

4.6 The MAC considers four indicators of whether it is sensible to employ migrants from outside the EEA:

- What are the alternatives to employing migrants?
 - How would bringing in migrants relate to skills acquisition of the UK workforce? Are there enough UK resident workers in training and education to fill shortages? Will bringing in migrants reduce employers' incentives to invest in training and up-skilling of UK workers?
 - How will the employment of migrants affect investment, innovation and productivity growth?
 - How will a decision to add an occupation to the Tier 2 shortage occupation list affect the wider UK labour market and economy? How, if at all, will access to migrant labour affect employment opportunities and conditions of the UK workforce?
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RCPCH Response

The College does not have sufficient information to provide a response to this question.

Call for Evidence

11. To what extent can existing nurses be retrained to do the jobs of specialist nurses who have left?

RCPCH Response

Retraining nurses to do the jobs of specialist nurses is possible of course, but it is the RCPCH view that this should not be done by reducing the existing non-specialist nursing workforce, given the shortages that are well-known.

12. To what extent are migrant nurses (whether from within the EEA or outside of the EEA) adequate substitutes for experienced nurses (whether from within the UK or outside of it)?

RCPCH Response

13. To what extent could shortages of nurses be addressed by the numbers of nurses who could re-enter the profession if they were incentivised to do so?

RCPCH Response

14. What proportion of trainee nurses do not go on to practice nursing as a profession? What is being done to reduce this number?

RCPCH Response

15. What is being done to improve workforce planning to reduce a reliance on migrant nurses?

RCPCH Response

16. What is being done to reduce the use of migrant nurses as a safety valve at times of peak demand/maximum shortage?