

Community Nursing Healthcare Policy Update

Week ending 28th July 2017

Primary Care

Warning over increased waiting times for GP and practice nurse appointments

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) [released](#) figures showing that, should current trends persist, 2022 will see over 100 million occasions in which patients wait more than a week for a GP or practice nurse appointment.

In 2016/17 there were approximately 80 million occasions on which patients waited more than a week for an appointment. Previous analysis of the GP Patient Survey found some patients across England were having more difficulty access appointments than others. 5.6 million patients across 21 Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) areas currently wait longer than a week for a GP or practice nurse appointment, 25% of the time.

The RCGP commented: *"If these patients can't secure an appointment with their GP when they need one, it's probable that they will return at some point to another area of the NHS, when their condition may have worsened, and where their care will cost the health service significantly more – something which could've been avoided if they'd been able to see their GP in the first instance".*

NHS England

NHS Workforce

NHS Digital [published](#) workforce statistics for April 2017. These showed a headcount of 1, 186,20, a fall of 0.1% from March 2017 and increase of 1.9% since April 2016. There were 1,046,263 members of full time equivalent (FTE) staff, a decrease of 0.1% since March 2017, but a 2.0% increase since April 2016.

Professionally qualified staff account for 54.0% of the NHS Hospital and Community Health Service (HCHS) FTE workforce with health visitors and nurses making up 27.2% of this group.

The highest percentage of vacancies was seen in the nursing and midwifery staff group, with these positions accounting for 38% of all FTE advertised vacancies. This is an increase of 16% since March 2016.

NHS Vacancies

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By Louise Clanfield, QNI Research Officer.

NHS Digital has [published](#) vacancy statistics. There were 30,613 FTE vacant positions advertised in March 2017. This is an increase on the two years prior (26,424 in 2016 and 26,406 in 2015). Between January 2017 and March 2017, 86,035 FTE vacancies were advertised in England, of which 81% were permanent.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) [commented](#): *"At the very moment the NHS needs to be recruiting more nursing staff, we learn the number is falling and the NHS finds itself advertising for more job we know it cannot fill. The true number of unfilled jobs is far higher than the number of online adverts and stands at 40,000 in England alone. A lethal cocktail of factors in resulting in too few nurses and patient care is suffering".*

NHS Providers [commented](#): *"Trusts are telling us that the issue of being able to recruit and retain the right staff to deliver services is now as serious as concerns over funding ... Trusts will do all they can to ensure safe care for patients, but where they can no recruit to roles they may be forced to rely on expensive agency staff, or stop services altogether. Both of these options are unsustainable in the long term"*

Publications

Framework for person-centred approaches in healthcare

Health Education England, Skills for Health and Skills for Care [published](#) a framework to support person-centred approaches, under which communities, people and families are at the core of health, wellbeing and care. The framework supports the health and social care workforce to communicate in a more meaningful manner, with advice and care tailored to suit the patient's needs. A more joined-up form of decision making is encouraged, in which all potential options are outlined and individuals are able to better manage their health and wellbeing through personalised support, planning and care.

Action plan for General Practice Nursing

NHS England [published](#) '*General Practice – Developing confidence, capability and capacity: A ten point action plan for General Practice Nursing*'. The plan outlines actions that need to happen in order for the capacity and capability of the primary care workforce to expand and for care to be provided closer to home. The ten points include:

- 1) Celebrate and raise the profile of general practice nursing, alongside making general practice an attractive career destination
- 2) Extend educator and leadership positions
- 3) Increase pre-registration placements
- 4) Implement preceptorships and inductions

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- 5) Improve 'return to practice' programmes
- 6) Deliver a radical upgrade in prevention
- 7) Support access to education programmes
- 8) Increase access to clinical academic careers and advanced practice programmes
- 9) Establish healthcare support worker, apprenticeship and associate career pathways
- 10) Improve retention.

QNI Chief Executive Dr Crystal Oldman CBE commented:

'We welcome the clear and specific goals in this new action plan, which will be of real benefit to nurses, employers and educators. It addresses many of the issues raised by the QNI in our own research into General Practice nursing, which argued that a joined up and wide ranging policy approach was needed to develop the full potential of the GPN workforce. This is an essential if the NHS is to deliver more care closer to home, supporting patients, carers and families in the community and primary care setting.'