

Press Release

1 November 2018

District Nurse Education Report and Five Year Review published

The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) has published its fifth annual report on District Nurse education in the UK.

The report analyses trends in the number of students enrolled on the District Nurse (DN) Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ) programme in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The report includes a review of trends over the previous five years.

The report indicates that the increase in District Nurse student numbers seen in recent years has stalled and raises concerns about the sustainability of the workforce.

Headline findings

- There were 551 new entrants to the Specialist Practitioner – District Nurse programme in 2016/17, down 14 from the previous year.
- 464 District Nurse Specialist Practitioners qualified in 2017, compared to 517 in 2016. This represents a significant drop of 10.25% and the first time that there has been a drop in numbers since the first District Nurse Education Report was published in 2013.
- There are 42 universities in the United Kingdom (UK) approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to offer the District Nurse Specialist Practice Qualification (DNSPQ). This is a drop from 44 approved courses in 2016.
- 38 universities responded to the survey; of these, two universities did not run the programme. One university was planning to apply for NMC re-approval in 2021.
- Of the 551 new students in the 2016-17 academic year, 395 were full time and 156 were part time.
- There has been a rise in the number of universities offering the V300 Independent Prescribing course as part of the programme, from 9 in 2015/16 to 12 in 2016/17.
- 91% of university respondents had mapped their programmes to the QNI/QNIS Voluntary Standards for District Nurse Education and Practice (2015).
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The QNI is concerned that the significant increases in District Nurse student numbers identified in the DN Education Reports between 2013/14 (QNI 2015) and 2014/15 (QNI 2016) have reached a plateau. The 2016/17 audit has now confirmed a decline in the number of new entrants by 2.47%, and a decrease in the number qualifying with the Specialist Practitioner Qualification by 10.25% compared to the previous year. This is a cause for serious concern.

In the context of the five years during which the QNI has been gathering data about the number of courses being offered and the number of students enrolled on them, the number of qualified District Nurses recorded in NHS workforce statistics has continued to fall. If the qualified District Nurse is to retain a key position within the multidisciplinary team in community healthcare, insufficient new nurses are being trained to replace those who leave or retire from the service.

Download the report here: www.qni.org.uk/resources/district-nurse-education-report-2016-17/

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Programme Directors for NMC approved Specialist Practitioner programmes in District Nursing were asked to complete an online survey between January and March 2018. 38 universities responded to the survey, out of a total of 42 approved to run the course.