Briefing

This briefing provides an update on the progress being made to address the ten key issues impacting the supply of nurses to the NHS. It offers an overview of what has been done to date, and what must be the next steps towards achieving a sustainable nursing workforce.
Factors affecting nurse supply: an update on progress

Improving retention

The current situation
• There has been an increase in nurse turnover and nurses leaving the service over recent years, as well as widening variation in trends between employers. Making improvements at a local level to reduce the number of nurses leaving is a high priority for every NHS organisation.

• NHS Employers and NHS Improvement have in place dedicated employer support programmes. Since 2016 we have found employers have made improvements in retaining staff by focusing attention on:
  • induction and supporting new starters in their first two years
  • implementing flexibility (and predictability) in employment for colleagues at all stages of their careers
  • creating different models to support career development and career planning
  • the wellbeing of staff and teams
  • the role of line managers.

• NHS Employers and NHS Improvement have produced guidance, case studies, facilitated workshops and held masterclasses for senior nursing and HR colleagues to share learning and support employers with continuous improvement. Specific examples of employers who have made progress in the areas outlined above and other resources can be accessed at www.nhsemployers.org/retention.

• In addition to work on staff engagement, diversity, health and wellbeing and reward, NHS Employers has a new employer support package on nurse retention which started in June 2018. It has three employer networks, each focusing on a core theme: supporting new starters; development and career planning; and flexibility in employment.

What still needs to happen
• Employers will also want to look at opportunities to develop solutions across an STP or equivalent.

National CPD funding (workforce development funding)

The current situation
• The level of national funding available to support all staff, not just nurses, with their development has been reduced from £190.9m in 13/14 to £83.5m in 17/18.

• Based on evidence provided by NHS Employers, the Health Select Committee recommended the decision was reversed.

What still needs to happen
• Reinstate funding as per recommendation by the Health Select Committee in January 2018.

Pre-registration nurse education and funding

The current situation
• A change to student loans model from NHS funded tuition fee and bursary arrangements, with the aim of facilitating an increase in nurse training places.

• The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) consulted on proposed changes to education framework and standards of proficiency. The final version was published in May 2018.

What still needs to happen
• To continue reviewing the impact of the funding changes on numbers starting in training and explore actions to mitigate reduction in numbers and look into how they can be increased.

• The implementation of the new NMC framework and standards by local higher education institutions and employers providing pre-registration nurse training.

Nurse degree apprenticeships

The current situation
• An apprenticeship standard has been developed by employers and was approved for use from September 2017.

• NHS Employers published guidance on using the apprenticeship levy and offering degree level apprenticeships.
What still needs to happen
• Extending the timeframe for accessing levy funds.
• National action to introduce greater flexibility for employers in using the apprenticeship levy.
• The NHS Staff Council is exploring options for apprentice pay. Discussions are unlikely to conclude before July 2018, employers may need to apply a local approach in the meantime.
• An increase in the number of education establishments approved to provide nurse degree apprenticeships (following progress on the above).

Nursing associate role
The current situation
• 35 pilot sites are in the process of training 2,000 nursing associates.
• There has been a decision to train an additional 5,000 nursing associates in 2018, and 7,500 in 2019.
• An apprenticeship standard has been developed for the nursing associate role.
• Consultation was launched in April 2018 on the regulation of nursing associates.

What still needs to happen
• Clarity on the implications of the NMC’s regulation of the role, including the approach to supernumerary training time to ensure the role is viable to employers.
• Further scale up: employers need clarity on the outcome of the pilot, the future training and regulatory requirements to be able to build this role into local workforce plans.

Return to practice
The current situation
• Health Education England’s (HEE) centrally funded programme has seen around 2,400 people commence training and return to employment in nursing since 2014.
• The programme continues to exist to support individuals to come back to nursing.

What still needs to happen
• A stocktake of the programme to date so that the NHS may use the learning to inform a continuation, and possible expansion, of the programme.

Pay and reward
The current situation
• The NHS Staff Council reached agreement on a proposed framework for changes to Agenda for Change pay, terms and conditions. There was increased focus on appraisal as part of pay progression system.
• NHS Employers published a range of resources on using reward strategically to meet workforce challenges such as attraction, recruitment and retention of staff.

What still needs to happen
• Confirmation from trade union consultation on new pay deal. This is expected in June 2018.
• New pay scales in operation from July 2018, backdated to April.

Placement funding
The current situation
• In October 2017, the government announced it will provide funding for the clinical places of 5,170 extra pre-registration nurse degrees from 2018.
• Employers and education providers have considered how many students they can accommodate from 2018 onwards in light of increased funding.

What still needs to happen
• Employers and education providers will need to continue to review how many students they can accommodate in individual organisations and with partners across the STP or equivalent.
• Work is underway to determine the mechanism through which clinical placement funding will be allocated from 2018/19 to 2020/21 to meet this commitment.

Perceptions of nursing
The current situation
• Nursing Now was launched in February 2018, in collaboration with the International Council of Nurses and the World Health Organisation. The three-year campaign aims to improve health globally by raising the profile and status of nurses worldwide.
NHS England’s work on transforming perceptions of nursing and midwifery was launched in March 2017. Nurses and midwives are encouraged to get involved and support 12 30-day challenges.

In May 2018, Health Careers (part of HEE) launched a campaign to encourage people to consider a career in nursing (and other health professions).

Some parts of the country have developed their own focused activity, for example Capital Nurse, the Greater Manchester nursing recruitment campaign.

What still needs to happen

- Continue to progress with national planning on a recruitment campaign aligned to the work already underway on the image of nursing, to attract more people to the NHS and nursing the profession.

Brexit

The current situation

- In June 2016 the UK voted to leave the EU.
- In December 2017, the UK government reached an agreement with the EU on citizens’ rights following departure from the EU, providing greater certainty to EU staff.
- The Cavendish Coalition has been formed – 37 social and health care organisations that represent the workforce supply needs of the whole sector to government.
- NHS Employers launched #LoveOurEUStaff, a social media campaign to publicly recognise the value of the EU NHS workforce.

What still needs to happen

- Arrangements above are due to remain in place until 2019 and are then subject to review.
- Development of a migration policy and system which is agile and responsive to employer needs, supports the delivery of health and social care services and which complements UK based training and recruitment for the sector.

Language competency requirements for nurses trained outside the UK

The current situation

- The NMC introduced alternative options to evidence language competence from 1 November 2017. This included the option to take the Occupational English Test (OET) instead of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).
- NHS Employers has published new language competency good practice guidelines for employers.

What still needs to happen

- Evaluation of the introduction of alternative options by NMC is in progress. The impact on numbers of nurses applying and successfully evidencing language competence needs to be assessed.
- An NMC review is underway and expected to report to NMC Council by end of 2018.