



Issues in healthcare

Lack of nurses

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Aim of presentation

- ▶ Discuss the issue of a shortage of nurses in Wales and in the entire UK
- ▶ Consider reasons for a lack of hospital care staff
- ▶ Talk over solutions and steps that the government attempts to take to solve the issue

Recent nurse numbers

- ▶ The government sources (GOV.UK., 2021) show that there were 301,491 nurses in England working for NHS in January 2021.
- ▶ In Wales, there were 22,850 NHS nurses in 2020 (Royal College of Nursing Wales, 2020).

GOV.UK. (2021). Record number of NHS doctors and nurses in England. [online]
Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/record-number-of-nhs-doctors-and-nurses-in-england>.

Royal College of Nursing Wales (2020). The Nursing Workforce in Wales 2020. [online]
Available at: <https://cdn.ps.emap.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/11/Nursing-in-Numbersv13.pdf>.

Reasons for nurses quitting their profession

- ▶ In 2021, there were over 27,000 nurses that have quit NHS (Denis Campbell, 2022).
- ▶ In a Leavers' survey 2022 done by Nursing and Midwifery Council asking for a reason for leaving nursing and midwifery (NMC, 2022).
- ▶ Most commonly it was due to retirement (43%), personal reasons (22%), leaving the UK (12%), and COVID pandemic (12%) (NMC, 2022).
- ▶ It becomes more and more difficult to work in an environment with a noticeable shortage of staff.

Denis Campbell (2022). Numbers of nurses and midwives leaving NHS highest for four years. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/may/18/numbers-of-nurses-and-midwives-leaving-nhs-highest-for-four-years>.

NMC (2022). Why do people leave the NMC register? [online] Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/data-reports/march-2022/leavers-survey-2022.pdf>.

Risk of shortages of nurses

- ▶ There is a serious problem of shortage of nurses with 1 in 10 required nurse positions being vacant (BBC News, 2022).
- ▶ There is also an increase in demand for nurses.
- ▶ A vast majority (80%) of asked nurses in a survey by Nursing Times in 2021 believe that patient safety may be affected by the shortage (Ford, M., 2021).
- ▶ Nurses may need to be working extra hours to cover for the lack of staff. This may lead to an exhaustion, stress, eventually leading to a risk for patient due to nurse overworking.

BBC News. (2022). NHS nurse shortages a risk to safety, says Royal College of Nursing. [online] 5 Jun. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-61692830> [Accessed 4 Jul. 2022].

Ford, M. (2021). Nursing Times survey reveals extent of Covid-19 workforce pressures. [online] Nursing Times. Available at: <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/workforce/nursing-times-survey-reveals-extent-of-covid-19-workforce-pressure-03-02-2021/>.

Shortage numbers

- ▶ There are reports of 38,952 nurse vacancies in England (Nursing Notes, 2021).
- ▶ There were 1,719 nursing vacancies in the Welsh NHS in 2020 (Smith, M., 2021). It requires nurses to work overtime, 34,284 hours in total weekly, which is work of 914 full-time nurses.

Smith, M. (2021). Wales faces a huge and growing shortage of nurses in the NHS. [online] WalesOnline. Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/health/wales-faces-huge-growing-shortage-22245723> [Accessed 4 Jul. 2022].

Nursing Notes. (2021). Worsening shortage of nurses and other NHS workers 'paints a bleak picture', warn health leaders. [online] Available at: <https://nursingnotes.co.uk/news/workforce/worsening-shortage-of-nurses-and-other-nhs-workers-paints-a-bleak-picture-warn-health-leaders/>.

Addressing the problem

- ▶ The government started an initiative in 2019 to hire 50,000 nurses by 2024 to fill in the gaps (The King's Fund., 2022).
- ▶ By March 2022, the government claims to be on a track with their promise, with 27,000 new nurses in the healthcare.
- ▶ The NHS claims that they have made steps to increase staff retention, addressing reasons for leaving their professions, such as work pressure, putting more effort in developing health and wellbeing programs.

The King's Fund. (2022). Is the NHS on track to recruit 50,000 more nurses? [online] Available at: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2022/04/nhs-recruit-50000-more-nurses>.

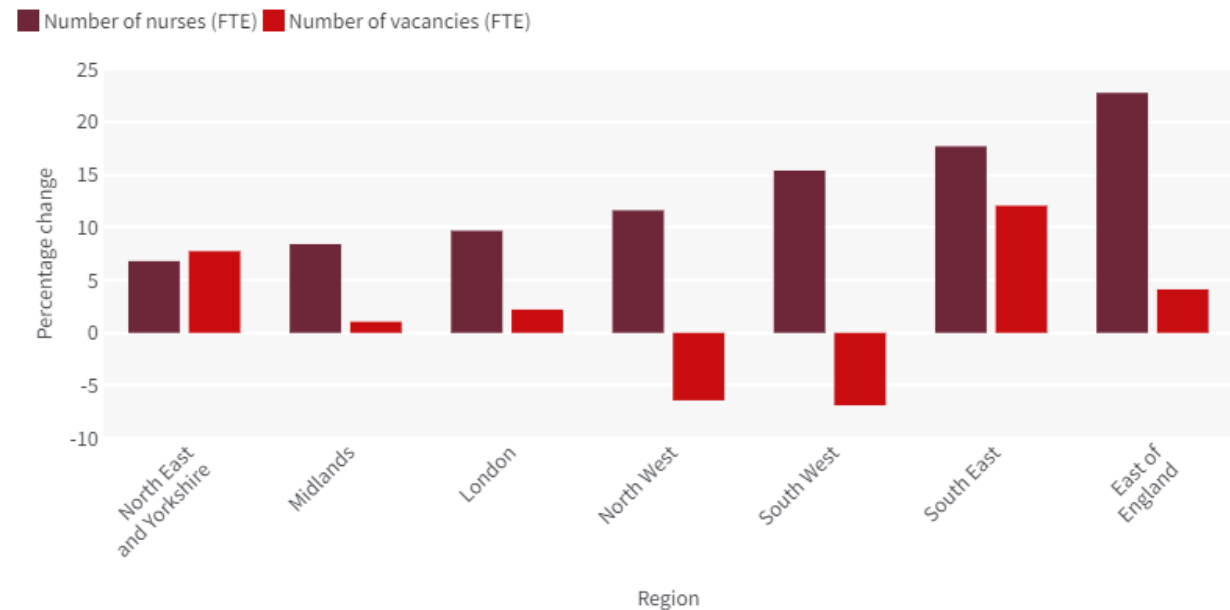
GOV.UK. (2022). Government over halfway to delivering 50,000 more nurses by 2024. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-over-halfway-to-delivering-50000-more-nurses-by-2024>.

Effectiveness of steps taken to deal with shortage

- ▶ The rise in number in nurses does not always cover for the increase in demand for those professionals. As The King's Fund indicates, the percentage of vacancies still goes up in North East and Yorkshire, Midlands, London, South East and East of England. The only regions with a decreased number of nurse vacancies were North and South West (The King's Fund., 2022).

Percentage change in number of nurses and health visitors and in number of vacancies

Full-time equivalent (FTE), England, December 2019 - December 2021



Source: [NHS Digital](#)

TheKingsFund>

A Flourish chart

(The King's Fund., 2022)

Difficulties for EU nurses to start working in NHS

- ▶ Due to Brexit, it has become difficult for European nurses to come to work in the UK.
- ▶ Foreign staff could help solve the problem of nurse shortages.
- ▶ It is required that EU nurses need to go through a process of assessment, which is £293 for adult nurses, while it goes up to £1,170 for specialist nurses (NMC., n.d.).
- ▶ Various requirements, complicated process discourages European nurses to work for NHS.

NMC. (n.d.). Brexit and what it means for nursing and midwifery - The Nursing and Midwifery Council. [online] Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/what-brexit-means-for-nursing-and-midwifery/>.

Conclusion

- ▶ The issue of nurse shortage is very serious in the UK, especially in Wales.
- ▶ The steps taken by government, although claimed to be successful, are not sufficient and the increases in number in vacancies is higher than new nurses.
- ▶ Brexit has highly discouraged European nurses to come in to the UK, as well as many have left the UK because of it.
- ▶ The problem is extremely important to address, as lack of nurses puts patients in risk, while human health and life should be the highest priority.

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