

Problem Solving in Health & Care

BMHP4029

Report



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Introduction

This report will include information on the topic of the shortage of nurses within the NHS UK healthcare system. It will consist of 3 themes: working conditions, pandemic and wellbeing. As well as how these three themes have impacted on the shortage of nurses within the UK. The purpose of this report is to identify the causes and the reasons why for the shortages of nurses within the NHS healthcare system. Potential outcomes that prevent the shortage of nurses in the future of the NHS.

Topic – Shortage of Nurses within the NHS UK

The shortages of nurses within the NHS has become an increasing problem in the United Kingdom healthcare system. When there is a shortage of nurses in the healthcare system it quicker service as people aspect can cause multiple knock on affects like a backlog of people accessing services and longer waiting. There are variety of different reasons for the cause of this issue such as; aging population, Covid-19 global pandemic, dropouts and mental wellbeing of people. A sufficient number of people have dropout of nursing courses each year. Wightwick A (2025) States Well known universities such as Cardiff University have made threats to cut nursing courses due to budget cuts. After relentless protesting they have decided to keep the course as is such high demand and it benefits the NHS having student nurses on placement which can boost the productivity and increase the amount patients that can be seen daily. The aging population is a occurring problem in the healthcare system and will affect the future of the health care system. The Aging population means that the general population is getting older and in turn it means that there are more older people to care for, as life expecting has gone up. The development of new treatments that can keep people alive longer can be a factor for this. There are Sparse amounts of nurses in the healthcare field with not enough people being able to care for this aging population. (NHS 2021) Factors such as the budget of the NHS have had an impact on how many nurses are in the NHS as the Government does not have the facilities to provide their wages. This can also lead to insufficient training of nurses as the government is unable to invest in additional training which could uphold and expend the quality of these nurses. These factors can be reasons as to why shortages are increasing in the NHS.

Theme 1 – Working conditions

Having good working conditions is important for the individual who are accessing services and the individual are working in the environment. Working conditions can be difficult for nursers as there are shortages of nursers in the field, long shifts, high workload and possibility difficult service users. As nursing is such a high demand job nurses are expected to do long shifts varying from 7 to 12 hours in a shift block not including overtime. (National Library of Medicine 2019) Statists show 73% percent of nurses suffer from burnout due to having such long shifts. (Nursing Times 2024) The working conditions in healthcare facilities are not designed for healthcare workers. Many facilities do not have changing rooms meaning they have to change in cramps toilets. 56 percent of NHS (2022) have said “they have nowhere appropriate to change in and out of work clothes”. Cramped working condition can cause the nursers to become more stressed out and become easily overwhelmed as it would become more and more frustrating overtime having to work in these conditions. BBC News (2025) State nurses and other healthcare workers want to dehumanise corridor care as it a undignified environment for service users accessing care and when they are a higher risk of harm. However in healthcare facilities they are very limited to beds and do not have space to accommodate to for everyone’s needs. in some instances, beds are placed in corridors and patients are made to sleep in chairs as there is simply not enough space for the patients. This can cause even more stress on the workers as they are constantly having to navigate around people and travel a lot further to reach patients, as well as detailing with constant complaints from patients, in which all they can do is apologies as they themselves are unable to fix this issue. Royal College of Nursing (2025) Suggest that pay is a main concern for nursers as they feel like they are not being paid fairly from the UK government. Factors such as cost of living and working in such a high demand job has had a negative impact on this sector. It can make healthcare workers feel unappreciated and feel like they are not being fairly recognised for their efforts from the Government. This meaning that fewer people are wanting to become nurses. Not having enough funding going into the NHS from government restricts the NHS hugely. This means they don’t have enough funding to hire new nursers, limit equipment in facilities and mean they have outdated equipment to use on patients. Not being able to hire new nursers can cause strain on the nursers that are working as they are already short staffed. Leading the older nursers having to work even more hours.

Theme 2 – Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic had a sufficient impact on the healthcare system globally. Even after 3 years since the end of the COVID pandemic it is still having an impact on the NHS today as well as a negative impact on the future of the NHS. It increased the amount of patients who needed to access care causing a strain on all departments of the healthcare system. During the pandemics nurses were very limited of staff due to already pre existing staff shortages, relatives having Covid meaning they had to isolate with them and not being able to train new people due to restrictions. (BMA 2024) This caused the healthcare workers to work overtime on top of there already busy schedules. The rules of having to isolate for up 2 weeks had a major impact on the staff shortages as these healthcare workers were constantly exposed and at risk to getting COVID-19 and so if they did fall ill with it, it was one less nurse to help with the pandemic, as it could have been deadly to their patients who usually feel ill with Covid-19 and then developed pneumonia which could have increased the amount of people having this if they would have decided to carry on working. This affected the amount of staff being able to work In all healthcare facilities. This created a knock on effect throughout the pandemic in NHS healthcare system. Due to the concern of people health being at risk during the pandemic, meant that they were very limited to resources. Which meant people couldn't have major surgeries, many people couldn't have urgent cancer treatments and not able to be diagnosed. This increased the amounts of deaths during this time because people couldn't receive essential treatment to help their illness. As Covid 19 was on a rise more variants were being discovered it creating a massive backlog patients also made waiting list a lot longer. This is still being seen today as the backlogs are still ongoing, with massive wait times for surgeries and for A&E, as many people are being made to wait for over 24 hours in a small, cramped room for minor issues as there are simply too many people for the NHS to handle at the moment. Nursers had to manage up to 4 patients at a time because of shortages of staff during the pandemic when they normally manage up to 1 to 2 at a time. (BBC NEWS 2025) This was a huge safety concern for nursers as they were being put at risk as they just didn't have enough staff to provide care for the patients. With the very long wait times, it was common for patients to become agitated and possibly even aggressive towards these nurses who were just trying to do their best and accommodate for their patients.

Theme 3

Wellbeing/Mental health

Having good mental health while working is essential for improving work productivity, staff overall performance and decreases absences. (Mind 2013). Nurses tend to struggle with their mental wellbeing while working due to being very short staffed and having to work long shifts, having to manage the workload on top of a very demanding job. Ford, M (2023) States "2 in 5 nursing staff say that their mental health is worse than during the peak of Covid". Nurses being stressed from a heavy workload can damage an individual physically and mental health and can ultimately lead to decline productivity in work. Leading to an increase in the amount of sick patients being untreated for. This burnout can lead to more extreme situations such as the nurses themselves seeking out mental health support and may even lead to them quitting their job as a nurse depending on the amount of support that has been put into place for them. Leading from this, it depends on how easily accessible and known about this support is, as if this support is hard to access and is unknown about so that it is not spoken about or nurses haven't been told how they can access this support, it can lead to these consequences over and over again with no sight in the future of it being fixed. NHS (2025) Suggest these are services available such as helplines and different health programmes for nurses. However Healthcare worker said it would be beneficial if they had spaces to a break and places to change would promote good wellbeing. During the pandemic patients were not allowed to have any visitors due to restrictions means that nurses were acting as support workers in other areas such as mental health support during this time they would have been many old people's only physical contact and were such, relied upon heavily to fulfil these roles, as well as their original.

Conclusions

Overall being a nurse and or a healthcare practitioner they face many challenges during their time at work which stretch from doing their own job in some situations the jobs of others. Furthermore they have to balance a high amount of work load and even managing others, everyday they still maintain being professional practice and manage to put the patients in the centre of their care even if there is burnout or increased levels of stress.

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