

KENT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

NURSING STAFFING LEVELS

Report from: Eileen Sills, Chief Nurse, NHS Kent and Medway
Becca Bradd, Chief People Officer, NHS Kent and Medway

Author: Tara Laybourne, Deputy Chief Nurse, NHS Kent and Medway

Summary

This report will provide the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) with an overview of the nursing staffing workforce position across Kent and Medway; the actions being taken by the Kent and Medway Trusts and the Integrated Care Board to ensure safe staffing levels and to attract, develop and retain the nursing workforce.

The report is provided following the request from HOSC members to understand acute Trust's nursing staffing, following East Kent Hospitals business case to increase nurse staffing by four hundred whole time equivalent (wte) earlier this year.

1. National context

- 1.1 Nursing staffing levels, as evidenced in the Royal College of Nursing (2021) *Guidance to safe nurse staffing levels in the UK report*, link directly to patient outcomes. Demonstrating sufficient staffing is one of the essential standards that all health care providers (both within and outside of the NHS) must meet to comply with Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulation.
- 1.2 There are currently an estimated 47,000 nursing vacancies in England (June 2022). NHS England have set a target to grow 50,000 nurses and although there are several initiatives in place including international recruitment, there are record numbers of nurses leaving the profession.
- 1.3 In 2016, the National Quality Board published *Safe staffing for nursing in adult inpatient wards in acute hospitals* which set out standards for safe staffing. Supporting tools and metrics were introduced to provide a standardised and systematic approach and measure of nurse staffing levels at ward level and provide recommended staffing levels.
- 1.4 These included the Safe Nursing Care Tool (SNCT) which assesses levels based on patients' needs (acuity and dependency) and Care hours per patient day (CHPPD), a recommended metric to provide a single consistent way of recording and reporting staff deployments and assessing productivity for acute and mental health Trusts. Other tools are used for district and mental health and whilst there is currently no national community nursing staffing tool, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) are participating in a national pilot to understand staffing level requirements.

1.5 All metrics are used alongside other quality metrics enabling nursing leaders to make safe and informed decisions regarding staff deployment in both registered nursing and health care support workers.

2. Kent and Medway context

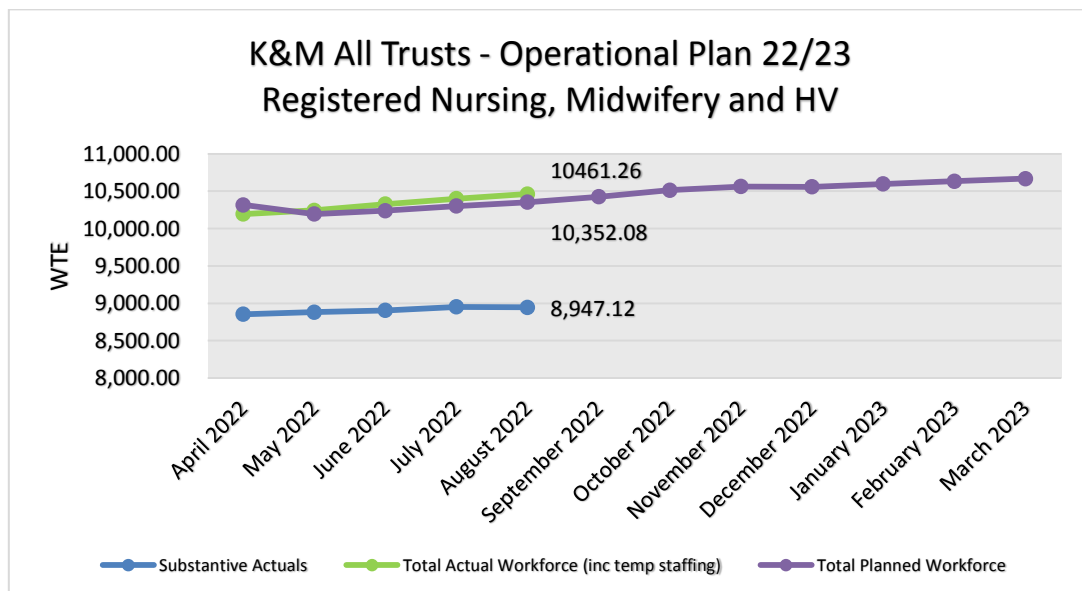
2.1 In Kent and Medway, the Integrated Care Board and NHS Trusts are committed to ensuring that we have sufficient nurses to safely staff our NHS services and use safe staffing tools to monitor this.

2.2 Currently across Kent and Medway there are:

- 1620 wte (15%) registered nursing vacancies in the acute Trusts (August 22)
- 13% turnover rate for registered nursing (August 22)

2.3 Included in the current vacancy rates for registered nurses, is an increased investment in nursing following the safe staffing reviews using the tools above, of an additional 520 nurses this year.

2.4 The graph below shows the total planned and actual nursing, midwifery, and health visitor workforce, showing that whilst the substantive vacancy gap remains, these vacancies are covered by temporary staffing to maintain safe staffing levels with all acute Trusts above plan, with Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (mental health) using just below plan and KCHFT (community Trust) below plan due to lower temporary staffing usage.



3. Growing our nursing workforce

3.1 Growing the nursing workforce is a key priority for both organisations and the Integrated Care Board. This is being undertaken through a number of different short and long term actions to create a sustainable nursing pipeline.

International recruitment

- 3.2 International recruitment is the main area of registered nursing growth in the short term across our acute providers. 844 international recruits were planned for 2022. As of August 2022, 342 wte (41%) nurses had arrived and were in post with a pipeline of nurses appointed awaiting start dates with ongoing active provider international recruitment plans to deliver the trajectory by December 2022. There is guidance from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) which describes the code of practice for recruiting international nurses which ensures ethical recruitment is undertaken; Kent and Medway is fully compliant with this guidance.

Domestic recruitment

- 3.3 All Trusts have active recruitment campaigns and local engagement with schools and education. Whilst the domestic recruitment is smaller than the international recruitment, there is a steady pipeline of domestic recruits into nursing at all Trusts.

Careers in nursing

- 3.4 The Integrated Care Board has been working with partners to develop a Kent and Medway Health and Care academy, to maximise promotion of opportunities for health and care careers and engagement with education and wider partners to capture the interest of children and young people from an early age. This includes increasing the Kent and Medway Nurse ambassadors to support the development of this work aligned to the National 'Next gen' programme for 15 to 18 year olds and increasing our collective careers engagement with schools and wider education.
- 3.5 £1.038m investment has been made in nursing workforce development this year through Health Education England (HEE) monies to continue the placement expansion team and support the development of students in schools and colleges. As part of the Kent and Medway academy, resource will be provided to support T-Levels and apprentices working with local colleges and schools to ensure we are capturing students in their early years to promote the profession. Further work is ongoing with HEE to support trainee nursing associates whilst collaborating with partners to ensure that our workforce modelling supports the ability to offer suitable employment at course completion.
- 3.6 The nursing profession already offers a wide diversity of careers and career opportunities, and we are working together to make these more transparent and accessible through out academy. Expanding our current and future workforce includes new roles and ways of working including development into advanced clinical practitioners and nurse consultant roles as well as expansion of entry roles into nursing.

- 3.7 Registered nurses are supported by health care support workers (HCSWs). Early career progression for HCSW's is being offered as trainee nursing associates and apprenticeships. The focus not only on creating a pipeline of future nurses but also to support the development of the support workforce.
- 3.8 We are also working in partnership with HEE, Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) and providers to improve attraction, attrition, and experience of our student nurses and we are increasing placement capacity by exploring the opportunities of diverse placements and working with students and the student council to support the student voice and lived experience.

National 50,000 programme

- 3.9 The National programme (running from September 2019 to March 2024) focuses on key areas of international and domestic supply to increase registered nursing numbers by 50,000 wte. This includes national recruitment campaigns. In August 2022, Kent and Medway had achieved 90.7% of their allocated target with 17 months remaining in the programme and is expected to meet the allocation.

4. Working Differently

- 4.1 It is recognised that to grow our nursing workforce and have a sustainable model for the future, we need to work differently and across organisations. Our ambition is to grow our own domestic supply including opportunities for new career routes, ways of working and roles, reducing our reliance on international recruitment and creating great places to work where our colleagues are looked after and supported to retain our valued workforce.
- 4.2 We are also looking at opportunities to work differently together. An example is the investment being made to standardise enhanced care (care that is provided for patients who need additional support for their physical and, or mental health). This ensures that patients receive the right level of support, by staff who have the right skills, releasing nursing time, and is affordable. Significant funding (£400,000) from the ICB workforce development fund has been allocated to support a 12-month project to deliver a standardised model.
- 4.3 We are also working in collaboration with leaders from the Capital Nurse programme, which was developed across London to create a 'Kent & Medway Nurse', attracting and retaining colleagues to work across the county, with a focus on developing innovative career pathways across organisations, delivered flexibly. This is part of a wider system workforce programme for nursing.
- 4.4 There is also work underway to support nursing colleagues with their wellbeing within organisations and enhanced offers of support through the Talking Wellness service.
- 4.5 The Trusts are also working collaboratively on the five national high impact interventions which have been shown as key features of retaining nurses in the

workplace. This includes sharing and learning across the system to drive best practice, working with the Integrated Care Board and the regional team.

- 4.6 Alongside the national development of the NHS workforce plan and the HEE Framework 15 which are being produced to set the long- term plan for workforce development including nursing, we are developing a people strategy for Kent and Medway which is being co-designed with partners and will be drafted by early 2023.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 We have a duty of care to provide safe staffing to our patients and this is being undertaken currently with the support of our temporary workforce. There are national workforce shortages due to the increased demand for nursing to support the acuity of patients in hospital. In Kent and Medway, we are working in partnership to not only attract our nursing workforce but also to grow, develop and retain the nursing workforce now and for the future.