

# KENT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## NURSING STAFFING LEVELS

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### Summary

This report will provide the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) an updated position of the nursing staff 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.

This report will update changes made since the last report to the committee in November 2022 which used an August 2022 dataset.

The dataset used for this report update is August 2022 to July 2023.

### 1. National context

- 1.1 Since the last report to the committee, the NHS long term workforce Plan has been published. This plan has specific aims for Nursing covering the next 15 years (to 2038). The Integrated Care Board (ICB) is expecting allocations from this per head count of population by the end of October 2023.

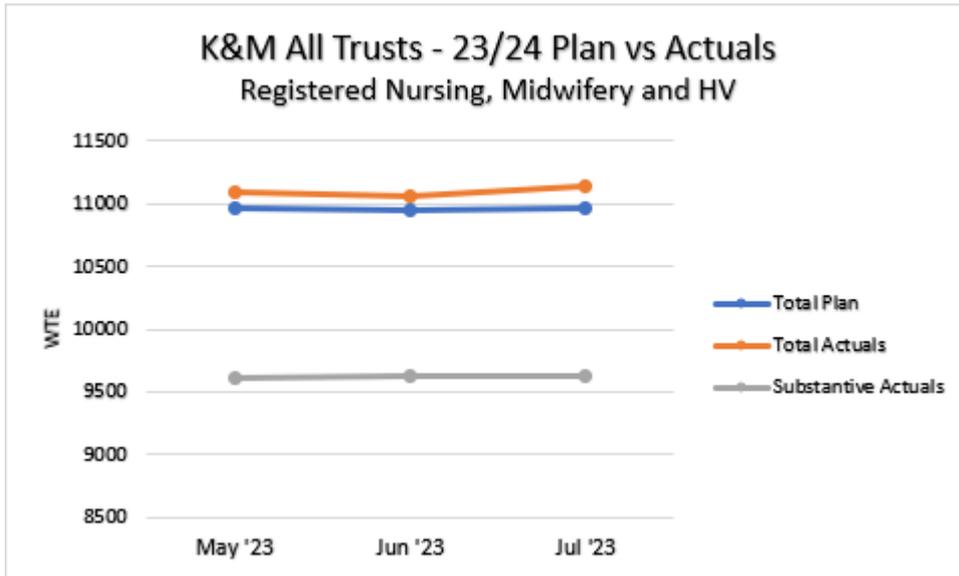
### 2. Kent and Medway context

- 2.1 In Kent and Medway, the ICB 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 The Kent and Medway People Strategy has been approved and will be published in October 2023 with a supporting Delivery Plan for 2023 – 2025. There are key proposed deliverables for growing our domestic supply for nursing, supporting local need and the long term workforce plan of which are detailed below.
- 2.3 Between August 2022 – July 2023, nursing establishments have increased by 425 wte (4%) across the six providers.
- 2.4 Despite this establishment growth, vacancies in July 2023 for registered nurses are at 12.1% (SE average of 12.4%). This is an improvement from 15% reported in the last report to committee (August 2022 data). This equates

to 1328 wte vacancies, compared to 1620 wte in the last report (August 2022 data).

2.5 Turnover stands at 10.9% (July 2023) compared to 13% (August 2022).

2.6 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.



### 3. Growing our nursing workforce

3.1 Growing the nursing workforce is a key priority for both organisations and the ICB. This is being undertaken through a number of different short and long term actions to create a sustainable nursing pipeline, as follows:

#### International recruitment

3.2 Kent and Medway have been hugely successful in recruiting nurses internationally. In 2022, the trajectory of recruiting 844 nurses was achieved, and the stretch target to March 2023, totalling 1020 nurses was also achieved. Providers continue to follow the code of practice for ethical recruitment. Planned activity for 2023 including winter funding equates to 537 nurses being recruited to, of which providers are on track to deliver.

3.3 Kent and Medway providers are taking a collaborative approach to recruiting International nurses, to share and learn working towards developing one pastoral care hub, providing a consistent offer and level of support for the nurses until they become registered. This planned model will provide economies of scale enabling our nurses to get a better experience and aims to reduce competition from within the system.

- 3.4 The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) changed their approach to English Language tests in May 2023, enabling Health Care Support Workers (HCSW's) who have held a registered nurse registration in their own country to apply to become registered in the UK through a process called SIFE (Supplementary Information from Employers). Employing organisations work with HCSW's who are employed with them to become registered nurses. Within Kent and Medway there are 99 HCSW's who are in the pipeline to become registered nurses through the SIFE process. This is still a fairly new process and the Integrated Care System partners are developing a consistent approach.
- 3.5 Each provider within Kent and Medway has submitted their application for the National Pastoral Care Quality Mark award awaiting the outcome. The quality mark is set as the gold standard.
- 3.6 As International recruitment sits within the National 50,000 nurses programme, the last round of funding has now been allocated from NHS England. For international nurse recruitment to continue, which will still be required, as this forms a large part of nurse recruitment pipeline, providers will need to fully fund this, unless any national funds are made available in the future. The risk associated with not having subsidised support has been escalated to the NHSE nationally. This is not only a Kent and Medway problem, but a national concern. It is anticipated that some funding to support the long term plan will be released but this is yet to be confirmed.

#### **Domestic recruitment**

- 3.7 All Trusts have active recruitment campaigns in place. There is a steady pipeline of domestic recruits into nursing at all Trusts.

#### **Careers in nursing**

- 3.8 The Integrated Care Board has been working with partners to develop a new and sustainable model for education and careers in nursing to support the continuation of the Health and Care Academy. Learning from best practice, a workshop is being planned bringing key stakeholders together to design the new model for Kent and Medway.
- 3.9 Partners are developing the Kent and Medway careers into nursing plan which incorporates undergraduate and post graduate nurses, entry level posts and advanced and consultant level opportunities.
- 3.10 As part of developing the education strategy for careers into health, our collective careers engagement with schools and wider education continues. A recent system wide event saw over 680 year 5/6 primary school children have an introduction to health and care careers.

- 3.11 Kent and Medway student council model is seen as the exemplar best practice model which other ICSs in the South East are looking to develop. The model supports the voice and lived experience of the students with direct engagement with the Chief Nursing officers and Senior nursing teams.
- 3.12 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 the work of the Health and Care 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. Developing T-Levels and Apprentices as a system is an area which we are developing further.
- 3.13 Placement providers, the ICB and NHSE W&TE are piloting a new blended two year MSc undergraduate programme with Coventry University which is planned to commence in January 2024. The course is being marketed by Coventry University and our Kent and Medway providers to attract local people with the intention of working in Kent and Medway at the completion of the programme.

#### **Canterbury Christchurch University (CCCU) Nursing programme**

- 3.14 In August 2023, CCCU made the system aware of Nursing students having a shortage of placement hours as a result of them not removing the emergency standards which were applied during the COVID-19 pandemic. 180 of the final year students who secured employment in Kent and Medway are being supported to complete their practice hours (supernumerary) in the trusts and where possible the ward/department where they have secured their new role, prior to receiving their registration. This will result in a short term delay on recruited numbers of registered nurses for a maximum of 8 weeks. For remaining students in year 1 and 2, additional placement hours will be incorporated into their programme. The NMC is planning a practice placement visit in November, with the system working collaboratively to plan for the visit.

#### **National 50,000 nursing programme**

- 3.15 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 June 2023 (most current dataset available), Kent and Medway had overachieved their set trajectory of 1342 wte by 605 wte. Monitoring of this continues as the programme still has 6 months left to run.

### **4. Working Differently**

- 4.1 It is recognised 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 Partners are working to deliver core and gold preceptorship standards across the system as defined in the national retention framework for nursing and midwifery. Significant improvements have been since it was launched in 2022 and the ambition is for all providers to achieve the core standards by December 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.