



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP-2020/0037, 28 February 2020

Nursing workforce shortage in England

Summary

There will be a debate in Westminster Hall on Tuesday 3 March at 9.30am on 'Nursing workforce shortage in England'. The debate will be led by Mohammad Yasin MP. This debate pack provides some background information on these issues and brings together related news articles, press releases and parliamentary material

The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

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Contents

1. Background	2
2. Nursing vacancy rates	3
3. CQC's State of Care Report 2018/19	4
3.1 Responses to workforce challenges	4
4. Interim NHS People Plan	5
4.1 Prioritise urgent action on nursing shortages	5
4.2 Actions to be taken in 2019/20	6
4.3 Suggested actions for full People Plan	9
5. Other measures announced by the Government	10
5.1 Nursing grant	10
5.2 NHS fast-track visa	11
5.3 Points-based immigration system	12
6. Further reading	15
6.1 Library publications	15
6.2 Sector comment	15
6.3 News articles	15
6.4 Reports	16
7. Parliamentary material	17
7.1 Oral questions	17
7.2 Written questions	17
7.3 Debates	19

1. Background

The need to recruit and retain an adequate health and care workforce has been described by many commentators as the greatest challenge currently facing the NHS.¹ The Care Quality Commission's [State of Care](#) report for 2018/19 stated that workforce problems are having a direct impact on care.

Nursing is facing one of the greatest recruitment problems and NHS hospitals and mental health and community providers are currently reporting a shortage of around 40,000 full time equivalent (FTE) nurses. According to analysis conducted by The Health Foundation, The King's Fund and Nuffield Trust in 2019, on current trends, in 10 years' time the NHS will have a shortfall of approximately 108,000 full-time equivalent nurses.²

The Government published an Interim People Plan in June 2019 which identified a need to prioritise urgent action on nursing shortages, and a full five-year People Plan is expected at some point this year. The Government has also made a number of pledges related to the nursing workforce, including an additional 50,000 nurses in the NHS by 2024/25, introducing a nursing grant, and devising a fast-track visa for NHS workers, including nurses.

2020 has been designated by the World Health Organisation as the first ever international [Year of the Nurse and Midwife](#), and they have launched a "year-long effort to celebrate the work of nurses and midwives, highlight the challenging conditions they often face, and advocate for increased investments in the nursing and midwifery workforce".³ As part of this, NHS England have said it is a priority for this year to "raise the profile of the rewarding careers that nursing and midwifery can offer"⁴ and have organised a [range of events](#).

¹ The Economist, A shortage of staff is the biggest problem facing the NHS, [23 March 2019](#)

² Nuffield Trust, [Closing the gap: Key areas for action on the health and care workforce](#), 21 March 2019

³ World Health Organisation, WHO Campaigns, [Year of the Nurse and the Midwife 2020](#)

⁴ NHS England, International year of the Nurse and Midwife 2020, [News and updates](#)

2. Nursing vacancy rates

Since 2010, the nursing workforce in England's hospitals has grown more slowly than other staff groups. Between November 2010 and November 2019, the number of nurses grew by 6.2%, compared with an increase of 20.6% in the number of hospital doctors and 18.4% in the number of qualified scientific, therapeutic and technical staff.

However, over the last few months the nursing workforce has been growing at its fastest rate in the last decade. The number of nurses has grown by 3% between November 2018 and November 2019. In November 2019, there were 290,474 full-time equivalent nurses working in the NHS.

There were 38,785 nursing vacancies as of December 2019, and nursing vacancy rates remain higher than other staff groups. 10.7% of nursing posts were vacant in December 2019 compared with 6.6% of medical posts and 8.1% of all NHS staff roles. This compares with a vacancy rate of 2.7% for the UK economy as a whole, according to ONS estimates for November 2019 to January 2020.⁵

Nursing vacancy rates fell year-on-year from 11.1% (39,686 posts) to 10.7% (38,785). The table below shows the December 2019 nursing vacancy rate in different parts of England. The vacancy rate fell in four regions, but not in London, the Midlands, or North East & Yorkshire.

Nursing vacancies in England				
NHS region	Number		Rate	
	Dec-18	Dec-19	Dec-18	Dec-19
East of England	4,001	3,625	12.0%	10.7%
London	9,161	9,334	13.5%	13.5%
Midlands	7,549	7,810	11.4%	11.5%
North East and Yorkshire	4,619	4,729	8.1%	8.2%
North West	5,214	5,056	9.6%	9.2%
South East	6,061	5,388	13.0%	11.3%
South West	3,082	2,843	10.0%	9.0%
England	39,686	38,785	11.1%	10.7%

Sources: NHS Digital, [NHS Workforce Statistics November 2019](#); [NHS Vacancy Statistics](#)

⁵ Office for National Statistics, [Vacancies and jobs in the UK: February 2020](#), 18 February 2020

3. CQC's State of Care Report 2018/19

The Care Quality Commission's (CQC) '[The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#)' report stated that "increased demand, combined with challenges around workforce and access, risk creating a perfect storm".⁶ The report highlighted particular challenges facing different regions and specialisms. The report highlights that over the last five years, the total number of mental health nurses has continued to fall, with 2% fewer mental health nurses in April 2019 compared with April 2014, with a sharper decline in inpatient mental health nurses. However, over the same period, the numbers of community mental health nurses have increased, reflecting the policy shift away from hospital-based care.⁷

The CQC's report highlights there is also regional variation in the ability of services to recruit and retain staff, with different localities and parts of the system facing different workforce challenges. For example, the report states:

Our staff have reported that in hospitals and mental health care, areas in and next to London face specific issues linked to higher costs of living and pay disparities caused by the London weighting.⁸

The report also emphasises that staffing shortages can further increase the strain on the workforce⁹; and the [2019 NHS Staff Survey results](#) also found that just over 40% of respondents said they had felt unwell as a result of work-related stress in the previous 12 months.¹⁰

3.1 Responses to workforce challenges

The CQC report outlines a number of responses that have been implemented across the NHS in response to workforce pressures. These include providing better opportunities for nurses and healthcare assistants to train and develop their careers.¹¹ Services are also trying to limit staff turnover and shortages, and increase wellbeing, through more flexible working arrangements.¹² Increased demand on services has also prompted the development of new roles, in primary care, such as advanced nurse practitioners and nursing associates. The CQC report notes that the introduction of the nursing associate role has the potential to create development opportunities for staff in both adult social care and health care.¹³

⁶ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), Summary, page 6

⁷ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 58

⁸ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 27

⁹ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 26

¹⁰ NHS Staff Survey 2019, National Results, National Trends, [Questions 2019](#), q11c

¹¹ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 29

¹² CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 28

¹³ CQC, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), page 29

4. Interim NHS People Plan

The Government published an [Interim NHS People Plan](#) in June 2019. It was aiming to publish a full five-year People Plan following the scheduled Spending Review, and it is now expected at some point this year.

The Interim Plan is structured around the following themes:

- 1 Improve our leadership culture
- 2 Prioritise urgent action on nursing shortages
- 3 Develop a workforce to deliver 21st century care
- 4 Develop a new operating model for workforce
- 5 Take immediate action in 2019/20 while we develop a full five-year plan

4.1 Prioritise urgent action on nursing shortages

The Interim People Plan states that whilst there are significant staff shortages across the country in many parts of the workforce, it identifies shortages in nursing as “the single biggest and most urgent we need to address”.¹⁴ The Plan explains this is partly due to the absolute numbers of vacancies, but also because nurses “form a critical part of the multiprofessional team needed to deliver the NHS Long Term Plan”.¹⁵

The Plan states:

We have vacancies across all areas of nursing, with the most significant shortages in mental health, learning disability, primary and community nursing. In hospital and community health services, there are around 40,000 reported vacancies in substantive nursing posts (with around 80% of these shifts currently covered by bank and agency staff), and there are further pressures in primary care.¹⁶

The Plan set out that a “multifaceted and carefully co-ordinated strategy”¹⁷ will be required to address this, with a focus on the following:

- Increasing supply through undergraduate nursing degree courses, as the largest and most effective supply route, and reducing attrition from training
- Providing clear pathways into the profession and further developing additional entry routes through the nursing associate qualification and apprenticeships
- Improving retention of our existing nursing workforce
- Supporting and encouraging more nurses to return to practice

¹⁴ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 20

¹⁵ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 20

¹⁶ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 20

¹⁷ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 20

- Ensuring that any nurses wishing to increase their part-time working hours are able to do so
- Providing continuing support to our people to develop their careers and their skills to respond to the changing needs of patients and citizens
- Continuing to focus on safe and effective staffing, building on existing policy and support to boards and staff in making effective decisions.

Given the lead times for training new nurses, we also need to increase international recruitment in the short to medium term to increase supply rapidly.

We consider that these actions will enable the NHS to grow the nursing workforce by over 40,000 by 2024, enabling us to keep pace with rising demand and make initial progress in bringing down substantive vacancy levels. The full People Plan will need to contain further action to enable us to go further in reducing substantive vacancy levels and reducing reliance on temporary staff, with the proposed aim of reducing vacancy levels to 5% by 2028.¹⁸

4.2 Actions to be taken in 2019/20

The plan goes on to outline the actions that can be taken immediately to address the nursing workforce shortage. The key actions are summarised below.

Retention

The plan identifies retention of current nurses as the most immediate action that can be taken. It notes that NHS Improvement, in partnership with NHS Employers, launched a [National Retention Programme](#) in 2017. The programme has reportedly seen turnover rates reduce from 12.5% to 11.9% nationally.¹⁹

The Direct Support Programme forms part of the National Retention Programme, and offers targeted, clinically-led support focusing on nursing and clinical staff turnover rates. Trusts are supported “intensively for 90 days to develop retention improvement plans, which must aim to improve turnover rates in 12 months”.²⁰ The plans have included initiatives around improving inductions, extending preceptorships, and increasing flexible working opportunities.²¹

Actions in 2019/20:

- Significantly expand our Direct Support Programme to all trusts to improve retention, with a focus on supporting early years retention and reviewing best practice in preceptorship arrangements.
- Work with primary care to extend the retention programme into general practice, in addition to incentives to support entry to and return to general practice nursing.

¹⁸ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 21

¹⁹ NHS Improvement, [The national retention programme two years on](#), 12 July 2019

²⁰ NHS Improvement, [The national retention programme two years on](#), 12 July 2019

²¹ NHS Improvement, [The national retention programme two years on](#), 12 July 2019

- Provide additional hands-on support in specialised areas where the need is greatest, including high secure hospitals and emergency departments.

Increasing undergraduate supply

The Interim People Plan notes that undergraduate degrees are currently the largest and most effective entry route into the nursing profession.²² However, it takes three years for a student to qualify through an undergraduate programme, with the potential for a two-year qualification through postgraduate routes resulting in an unavoidable time lag.²³

Actions in 2019/20:

- Deliver a rapid expansion programme to increase clinical placement capacity by 5,000 for September 2019 intakes. We will work directly with trust directors of nursing to assess organisational readiness and provide targeted support and resource to develop the infrastructure required to increase placement capacity.
- Undertake a more comprehensive review of current clinical placement activity, identify outliers and provide support to remove barriers to expansion for future intakes. This will include options for expanding the provision of placements in primary and social care and explore how innovative approaches and best practice can support expansion.²⁴

Stimulating demand and shifting perceptions

The Interim People Plan states that increasing clinical placement capacity is only one side of the equation, and there is also a need to ensure sufficient interest from individuals to enter the profession.²⁵

Applications for nursing and midwifery courses have reportedly fallen since the education funding reforms, with a 31% decrease between 2016 and 2018. The Plan emphasises there has been a 50% decrease in applicants for learning disability nursing since 2016.²⁶

The 2018 acceptance rate for nursing was 55%, compared with an average across all Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) undergraduate courses of 76%. The Plan states “filling the places created through our ambition of a 25% expansion would require raising the acceptance level to around 70%”. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have highlighted quality of applications as a barrier to increasing current intake levels.²⁷

The Plan identified a need to strengthen the image and perception of the profession to encourage the next generation of nurses.²⁸ Therefore, it suggests building on the [‘Transforming Perceptions of Nursing and Midwifery’ ambassador network](#), which has around 2,000 nurses and

²² NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 21

²³ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 22

²⁴ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 22

²⁵ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 23

²⁶ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 23

²⁷ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 24

²⁸ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 24

midwives across England actively promoting the profession in schools and communities.²⁹ The Plan indicates the ambassador network will be expanded to particularly target 15 to 17 year olds, “as well as leveraging work experience programmes, the emerging cadet scheme and our wider volunteering strategy”.³⁰

Actions in 2019/20

- Work with national partners to consolidate the current recruitment and perception campaigns run by different national bodies, to develop a single campaign that reflects the realities of a career in modern nursing at the cutting edge of clinical practice. This will focus on those branches of nursing with the greatest vacancies, address demographic issues, and support local health systems and the biggest challenges by linking national and local initiatives.³¹

Improving the student experience and reducing attrition

The Plan commits to working with students, HEIs and clinical placement providers to build on the Reducing Pre-registration Attrition and Improving Retention (RePAIR) programme and support more students to complete their studies.³²

Actions in 2019/20

- Work with the Office for Students to agree a standard definition of attrition for all healthcare programmes and ensure this is recorded and reported in a way that enables better workforce planning.
- Work collaboratively with HEIs to ensure every learner is well prepared for each practice placement and that every learner reports a meaningful placement.
- Develop a toolkit for supervisors and assessors to enable them to support the wide diversity of learners.³³

Return to practice

The Plan notes that since September 2014 Health Education England has recruited more than 5,400 nurses onto return to practice courses.³⁴

The Plan stated that Health Education Health Careers would be launching a marketing campaign, including a partnership with Mumsnet, “designed to inspire more nurses to return to practice”.³⁵

Actions in 2019/20:

- Launch our new return to practice campaign³⁶

²⁹ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 25

³⁰ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 25

³¹ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 25

³² NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 25

³³ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 26

³⁴ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 26

³⁵ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 26

³⁶ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 26

International recruitment

The Plan states that in the short to medium term, given the existing vacancy rates and the lead times for training new nurses “we will need to increase international recruitment significantly to secure rapid increases in supply”.³⁷

Actions in 2019/20:

- Develop a new procurement framework of approved international recruitment agencies for ‘lead recruiters’ to draw on, ensuring consistent operational and ethical standards, to support increased international recruitment.
- Develop a best practice toolkit, with NHS Employers and other national partners, to support employers by highlighting good practice in terms of practical and pastoral support to improve experience and ultimately retention.
- Work with the Department of Health and Social Care and professional regulators to support improvements to regulatory processes, exploring where changes may help facilitate streamlining of registration processes and reduction of recruitment timelines.³⁸

4.3 Suggested actions for full People Plan

The actions above are to be delivered “immediately” according to the Interim People Plan, but the document acknowledges they are unlikely to fully address the supply challenge and further action will be needed. In the long term, it is suggested that routes into the profession are developed. Proposals include the creation of a blended learning nursing degree programme with online modules, and expanding the pilot programme for nursing associates wishing to continue their studies to registered nurse level.³⁹

The Interim Plan also states that it is necessary for the full People Plan to address how students are supported during their studies, to support shortage areas and branches, and to continue professional development and workforce development.⁴⁰

³⁷ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 27

³⁸ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 27

³⁹ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, page 28

⁴⁰ NHS, [Interim NHS People Plan](#), June 2019, pages 29-31

5. Other measures announced by the Government

The Government has made a number of announcements of measures to increase the number of nurses working in the NHS. In particular, the Government has pledged to increase nurse numbers by 50,000 over the next 5 years, following a commitment in the 2019 Conservative Party election manifesto. The pledge faced criticism during the election campaign for not being sufficiently clear that some of the 50,000 increase would be met by policies to ensure fewer nurses leave the NHS. The BBC reported that of the 50,000 increase, 14,000 more nurses will be trained with extra clinical placements funded in the NHS; 5,000 more nursing staff will come from apprenticeships, 12,500 more nurses will be recruited from overseas; and better retention policies will ensure that 18,500 nurses who might otherwise have left remain in their jobs. This pledge was also considered by Full Fact.⁴¹

5.1 Nursing grant

The Government announced in a press release on 18 December 2019 '[Nursing students to receive £5,000 payment a year](#)' that from September 2020 new and continuing nursing students would receive extra payments:

Nursing students will benefit from guaranteed, additional support of at least £5,000 a year to help with living costs.

The funding will be given to all new and continuing degree-level nursing, midwifery and many allied health students from September 2020. It is expected to benefit more than 35,000 students every year.

The announcement of the funding comes ahead of the UCAS university application deadline of 15 January.

The funding comes as part of the government's pledge to increase nurse numbers by 50,000 over the next 5 years.

Students will receive at least £5,000 a year, with up to £3,000 further funding available for eligible students, including for:

- specialist disciplines that struggle to recruit, including mental health
- an additional childcare allowance, on top of the £1,000 already on offer
- areas of the country which have seen a decrease in people accepted on some nursing, midwifery and allied health courses over the past year

This means that some students could be eligible for up to £8,000 per year, with everyone getting at least £5,000. The funding will be available from next year. Further details on who can access the support will be available in early 2020.

⁴¹ Full Fact, [Is the 50,000 more nurses claim from the Conservative manifesto accurate?](#) 10 December 2019

The Library have published a briefing paper on '[Funding for healthcare students in England](#)' which provides information on the former NHS bursaries in place until August 2017, and the standard support system which replaced them. England was the only nation of the UK to abolish the bursary scheme for nursing students. Concerns were expressed about the impact the changes would have on recruitment⁴², and the number of applicants for nursing degrees fell in the first two years after the change in funding was introduced. In England, the number fell by 23% in 2017 and 12% in 2018 – an overall fall of 32%.⁴³

5.2 NHS fast-track visa

During the General Election the Conservatives pledged to introduce a new NHS fast-track visa, with decisions made within two weeks. The visa fee will reportedly be £464 (half the usual fee for the current Tier 2 (General) visa for a shortage occupation job).⁴⁴

NHS workers applying through this route will reportedly be able to pay back the cost of the immigration health surcharge through their salary, if the charge is not covered by the NHS trust offering the job.⁴⁵

The immigration law website Free Movement commented that fast-track processing is already available for non-settlement visas, with most able to be processed via a priority service within a week for around £250. Free Movement note that it is currently unclear if NHS workers will be offered a fast-track service free of charge, or if there will be hidden costs attached, such as fees to book appointments or scan documents.⁴⁶ The Home Office have said they will publish further information on the fast-track visa in due course.⁴⁷

In response to the NHS visa announcement, Dame Donna Kinnair, Chief Executive and General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing released the following statement:

Failure to train enough nurses is leaving NHS and social care short-staffed and forced us to recruit overseas in the short-term. A fairer immigration system is a key demand we're making of politicians this election - valuing skills and not fixating on arbitrary targets – but the devil will be in the detail and we cannot be satisfied by rhetoric alone. The NHS doesn't operate in isolation and nurses work in social care and many other places.

But it is of deep regret that the Prime Minister is preserving the immoral and heartless charge for overseas nurses to use the same services they keep running. It should be abolished, not spread out

⁴² House of Commons Library, [Funding for healthcare students in England](#), 28 January 2020

⁴³ House of Commons Library, [Funding for healthcare students in England](#), 28 January 2020

⁴⁴ ITV, [Tories propose fast track 'NHS visa' for doctors and nurses](#), 8 November 2019

⁴⁵ ITV, [Tories propose fast track 'NHS visa' for doctors and nurses](#), 8 November 2019

⁴⁶ Free Movement, [New NHS visa announced](#), 8 November 2019

⁴⁷ Home Office & UKVI, [The UK's points-based immigration system: policy statement](#), 19 February 2020

every month. There are tens of thousands of unfilled nursing jobs and we need more ambitious plans than this to address it.⁴⁸

5.3 Points-based immigration system

The Home Office published a [policy paper](#) outlining plans for the UK's points-based immigration system on 19 February 2020. The document provides a framework and much of the operational detail is not yet known. The Home Office have said they will publish further detail on the points-based system in due course, including detailed guidance regarding the points tables, shortage occupations and qualifications.⁴⁹

The paper sets out that a total of 70 points will be required to be eligible to apply, and some characteristics are tradeable:

Characteristics	Tradeable	Points
Offer of job by approved sponsor	No	20
Job at appropriate skill level	No	20
Speaks English at required level	No	10
Salary of £20,480 (minimum) – £23,039	Yes	0
Salary of £23,040 – £25,599	Yes	10
Salary of £25,600 or above	Yes	20
Job in a shortage occupation (as designated by the MAC)	Yes	20
Education qualification: PhD in subject relevant to the job	Yes	10
Education qualification: PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job	Yes	20

The policy paper makes an explicit reference to nurses applying under the new points-based system:

Likewise, a nurse wishing to come to the UK on a salary of £22,000 would still be able to enter the UK on the basis that the individual would be working in a shortage occupation, provided it continues to be designated in shortage by the MAC.

⁴⁸ Royal College of Nursing, [RCN responds to Conservatives' NHS visa announcement](#), 8 November 2019

⁴⁹ Home Office & UKVI, [The UK's points-based immigration system: policy statement](#), 19 February 2020

The MAC will be commissioned to produce a shortage occupation list covering all jobs encompassed by the skilled worker route and to keep the list under regular review. Allocating extra points for occupations that the MAC determines to be in shortage in the UK will provide immediate temporary relief for shortage areas, making it easier to recruit migrants. However, we expect employers to take other measures to address shortages and the MAC will look at this when they review whether an occupation is still in shortage.⁵⁰

The Migration Advisory Committee report '[A points-based system and salary thresholds for immigration](#)' provides additional commentary related to the points-based system and its impact on nursing. For instance, the report makes a number of points in relation to nurses and the Shortage Occupation List:

...the ability to put migrants on the lowest points of pay scales seems to lead to migrants in health and education being paid less than resident workers with equivalent experience. In our Full Review of the Shortage Occupation List, we found that nurses on Tier 2 (General) visas earn about 20 per cent less than other nurses, controlling for characteristics. Therefore, public sector employers should pay particular attention to these practices.⁵¹

...As part of our review of the Shortage Occupation List, we looked at the share of females in Tier 2 (General). We found that for Tier 2 (General) Restricted Certificates of Sponsorship (RCoS) used in 2018, 46 per cent were female. This is in line with the gender split of the overall UK labour market. As would be expected, there is significant variation in the share of females across occupations. For example, nurses accounted for 78 per cent of used RCoS in 2018 compared to 25 per cent of IT professionals.⁵²

In response to the announcement of the new points-based immigration, the Royal College of Nursing published the following statement:

We are concerned that these proposals from the Government will not meet the health and care needs of the population. They close the door to lower-paid healthcare support workers and care assistants from overseas, who currently fill significant numbers of posts in the health and care workforce.

While recruitment of overseas staff shouldn't be used as a replacement for domestic workforce supply, it's clear that it will need to continue in the short to medium-term so that health and social care services in the UK can continue to function.

We are clear that maintaining arbitrary salary thresholds will not enable health and social care services in the UK to recruit and retain the number of staff needed to meet the needs of the UK's population.

We are also very disappointed to see the Immigration Health Surcharge of £400 a year for overseas staff remain in place. Nursing staff from abroad, whom we want to attract to

⁵⁰ Home Office & UKVI, [The UK's points-based immigration system: policy statement](#), 19 February 2020

⁵¹ Migration Advisory Committee, [A Points-Based System and Salary Thresholds for Immigration](#), page 142

⁵² Migration Advisory Committee, [A Points-Based System and Salary Thresholds for Immigration](#), page 145

the UK, already pay for the NHS through their taxes and should not have to pay this extra charge, which applies whether or not they access services.⁵³

⁵³ Royal College of Nursing, [Royal College of Nursing comments on new UK points-based immigration system](#), 18 February 2020

6. Further reading

6.1 Library publications

[Health and social care workforce gap](#), House of Commons Library, 10 January 2020

[NHS Key Statistics: England, February 2020](#), House of Commons Library, 20 February 2020

[NHS staff from overseas: statistics](#), House of Commons Library, 8 July 2019

[General debate on the effect of leaving the European Union on the UK's health and social care sector debate pack](#), House of Commons Library, 15 March 2019

The House of Commons Health Committee also published a report on [‘The nursing workforce’](#) on 16 January 2018.

6.2 Sector comment

[Join our campaign for safe staffing](#), Royal College of Nursing

[RCN submits pre-budget asks for nursing](#), Royal College of Nursing, 27 February 2020

[Latest plans for NHS England staffing unlikely to improve cancer care](#), Brain Tumour Research, 27 February 2020

[Nurse shortage now a crisis, says RCN](#), Royal College of Nursing, 28 November 2019

6.3 News articles

[When will the ‘fastest expansion in mental health nursing in NHS history’ actually start?](#) Nursing Times, 21 February 2020

[UK's expensive visa fees ‘could deter NHS staff and scientists’](#), The Guardian, 20 February 2020

[Cancer patients ‘left in the dark’ amid staff shortages, charity warns](#), ITV, 10 February 2020

[Nurses visit No 10 to demand ‘bold’ action on workforce crisis](#), Nursing Times, 6 February 2020

[Nursing applications still 25% lower than bursary-era figures, while workforce crisis continues](#), Royal College of Nursing, 6 February 2020

[First graduates of Addenbrooke’s hospital apprenticeship scheme tackling national nursing shortage](#), ITV, 5 February 2020

[Nurse shortage forces NHS hospital to shut critical-care beds](#), The Guardian, 31 December 2019

[Nurses say training grants are only ‘first step’ in fixing NHS shortage](#), The Independent, 17 December 2019

[Health and care workforce being hollowed out](#), HSJ, 29 November 2019

[Nursing shortages forcing NHS to rely on less qualified staff – report](#),
The Guardian, 28 November 2019

6.4 Reports

The Health Foundation, [Health and social care workforce: Priorities for the new government](#), 27 November 2019

The Health Foundation, [Falling short: the NHS workforce challenge](#),
November 2019

NHS Providers, [The State of the NHS Provider Sector](#), October 2019

Care Quality Commission, [The state of health care and adult social care in England 2018/19](#), 14 October 2019

Nuffield Trust, [The NHS workforce in numbers](#), 8 May 2019

The King's Fund, [Closing the gap: key areas for action on the health and care workforce](#), 21 March 2019

The King's Fund, [NHS sickness absence: let's talk about mental health](#), 1
October 2019

7. Parliamentary material

7.1 Oral questions

[NHS and Social Care: Staffing](#), HL deb 15 January 2020, volume 801, c697

Asked by: Baroness Walmsley (LD)

My Lords, there are particular shortages of nurses in certain specialties such as children's palliative care, children's mental health and learning difficulties. What will the Government do to improve the situation in those very important and sensitive areas?

Answering member: Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford

The noble Baroness is quite right that we want to target recruitment towards the areas with the greatest shortages. That is one of the reasons why, when we announced the new non-repayable funding, we also announced a top-up for targeted specialties struggling to recruit. It is also why we have announced the availability of placements which can enable nurses to develop experience in specific specialties, which make it easier to recruit and retain those nurses in very rewarding and sometimes hard to recruit specialties.

7.2 Written questions

[Nurses: Recruitment](#), PQ15139, 27 February 2020

Asked by: Dr Dan Poulter

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether he plans to increase the number of (a) full-time, (b) part-time and (c) full-time equivalent nurses.

Answering member: Helen Whately | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Individual health and care employers are responsible for determining workforce needs and agreeing working patterns locally.

National action is being taken to support local decisions about staff working patterns, and the recruitment and retention of nursing staff more generally, specifically the Government's commitment for 50,000 more nurses in the National Health Service.

Further, the NHS Interim People Plan sets out an ambition to increase flexible working for staff through a combination of technology and a change in people practices, to give people greater choice over their working patterns and help them achieve a better work-life balance.

[Health Professions: Recruitment](#), PQ1041, 24 October 2019

Asked by: Jim Shannon

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of specialist prostate care (a) nurses and (b) doctors in the NHS.

Answering member: Edward Argar | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Urology is the branch of medicine that includes surgical and medical diseases of the prostate.

Since 2010, the number of full-time equivalent doctors working in urology has increased by 26%, rising from 1,602 in June 2010 to 2,024 in June 2019.

The Nursing and Midwifery Council do not require a specific post-registration education programme to be undertaken for a Registered Nurse to become a specialist prostate nurse.

Individual organisations develop registered nurses into this role locally, with support from Local Workforce Action Boards and are responsible for creating the number of specialist prostate nurse posts they require, based on population need.

The interim NHS People Plan puts the workforce at the heart of the National Health Service and will ensure we have the staff needed to deliver high quality care. In advance of publishing the final People Plan, the NHS will establish a national programme board to address geographical and specialty shortages in medicine.

Decisions about the NHS workforce in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are a matter for the devolved administrations of those countries.

[Nurses: Recruitment](#), PQ708, 22 October 2019

Asked by: Eleanor Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to (a) encourage and (b) support people to enter the nursing profession.

Answering member: Edward Argar | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

Appropriate staffing levels are an important element of the Care Quality Commission's registration regime. It is the responsibility of individual National Health Service health and care employers to have staffing arrangements in place that deliver safe and effective care. This includes recruiting the staff needed to support these levels and meet local needs.

As part of the NHS People Plan, NHS Improvement and Health Education England are considering how best to support the NHS in ensuring it has access to the staff it needs across England. This has focused on areas such as retaining nurses already employed; supporting their existing nursing workforce in areas such as flexible working; investing in nursing staff's Continuous Professional Development; and increasing undergraduate supply through attracting more students to study nursing.

The University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) reported that applicants to study nursing have increased by 4% compared to the same period last year.

NHS England and NHS Improvement working with Health Education England are also delivering a major communication campaign 'We are the NHS'. The campaign aims to reduce vacancy rates across the NHS, with a focus on the nursing profession. There has been a strong focus on recruitment to courses starting in September 2019. From September 2019, a further campaign has been launched to encourage UCAS

applications to the January 15 deadline for nursing courses starting in September 2020.

The NHS Ambassadors scheme encourages people working and/or studying in healthcare to volunteer one hour per year to speak in schools about their roles or participate in careers events and activities.

Through the interim People Plan, during 2019/20 we will focus on increasing applications to undergraduate AHP education, particularly in the shortage professions of therapeutic radiography, podiatry, orthoptics and prosthetics/orthotics, and developing Allied Health Professionals faculties to work with healthcare providers to identify how to expand clinical placement activity.

Our ongoing 25% expansion of medical school places in England will see an additional 1,500 new medical school places for United Kingdom domestic students. The extra places have been distributed in geographic areas where there have been fewer training places per unit population.

7.3 Debates

[NHS Funding Bill](#), HC deb 27 January 2020, volume 670

[Public Services](#), HC deb 16 October 2019, volume 666

[NHS Workforce: England](#), HC deb 17 July 2019, volume 663

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