

Response to Suffolk Health Scrutiny Committee
Issues in attracting and retaining nurses in Suffolk
30 June 2016

Who is responsible for workforce planning nationally and locally?

Health Education England (HEE) is the single national body which leads and coordinates the development of the health workforce through local education training boards (LETBs) and workforce partnerships. The local partnership is Norfolk and Suffolk Workforce Partnership (NSWP) which develops a strategic review of local demographics.

To what extent is the supply of trained nurses sufficient to fill vacant posts in the Suffolk Health and Care system?

Nursing student supply (and therefore registered nurse supply) is planned upon the ability of the NHS to fund the demand it is forecasting. This makes workforce planning difficult at times of funding deficits as we can only stay within NHS financial envelope even though there is shortfall to meet demand. Additionally Trusts have to limit the number of students it can support based on operational demand and the number of available supervisors.

What reasons have been identified for this?

Suffolk is a rural area which does not always attract younger age groups as they wish to experience life within cities.

What attracts people into nursing and why do they leave the profession?

We believe that people come into nursing for a number of differing reasons. They may have had a personal experience either receiving or witnessing care provided by the nursing profession, or having a relative or friend who works within nursing. Equally they may view it as an opportunity for career progression and desire to undertake a degree pathway. A wish to apply the fundamental principles of caring for others is also a strong factor in driving people towards the profession.

Reasons for leaving the profession are equally varied. It may be a simple wish to work elsewhere but it could also be an inability to commit to the hours required in their post or a lack of opportunity for personal career development. Capability issues and stress can also be factors. Sometimes there is disillusionment with the profession with it not meeting initial expectations.

How is nurse education and training funded?

Pre-registration education is currently funded by Health Education England with capped student numbers. Post-registration education currently funded by Continuous Professional Development. Changes to bursary due in September 2017 which will remove capped student numbers and students will self-fund

What is being done to address issues with recruitment and retention of nurses in Suffolk in the short term?

Short-term the Trust utilises bank staff and the contracted pool which is a team of staff who do not work to specific departments and fill gaps. Agency staff are also used in a controlled manner. We continue to offer pre-registration placements and return to practice placements as well as attending recruitment events within Health Education England institutes.

i and j) What will be done to address issues of recruitment and retention of nursing staff in Suffolk in the medium to long term? What can be done to ensure that Suffolk is an attractive place for nursing staff to train and establish a career?

All registered nursing posts are hard to recruit to currently. We are looking at all available potential options to attract staff into these roles. This includes attending a series of recruitment fairs on the edges of our catchment, a bus campaign and working with University Campus Suffolk (UCS) to develop a clear marketing strategy and campaign to attract student nurses to West Suffolk. The Trust also recruits from within the EU, notably from Portugal.

Skill shortages in nursing have been partly addressed with the creation of the assistant practitioner role to reduce demand on registered nurses. The Trust is also bidding to become a test site for the new nursing associate role. The Trust has implemented the care certificate for all new nursing assistants. We also offer apprenticeships in a number of areas as well as supporting staff in the pursuit of foundation degrees. We also offer various role-specific training opportunities such as dealing with challenging situations, assertiveness and medical terminology.

We need to promote Suffolk as a safe place for families to live with excellent transport links to cities such as London, Cambridge and Norwich. Although this is a rural location, this does not hinder the dynamic professional opportunities and career pathways that we are able to offer. We maintain strong links with our colleagues in neighbouring counties and across the region. We are the first county within the region to employ physicians associates and have also led the way with the development of our bands 1 – 4 workforce. The development of a new website for the WSFT will promote these positive attributes of a career in Suffolk.