

ABPN Fact sheet

Workforce data - nurses working with children and young people¹

Applications to nurse education programmes

England

Overall, the latest regional data from the university admissions service (UCAS) highlights for example that the number of individuals commencing nursing education programmes fell by up to 40% in parts of England between 2020 and 2023. The aim of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan in England was to increase the overall nursing workforce from 350,000 to 550,000 by 2037.

In 2016 bursaries were removed in England², meaning students pay more than £9,000 per year in order to become a registered nurse. The Royal College of Nursing is calling for the reinstatement of bursaries for nursing students³.

Wales

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) highlights that in March 2024 there was a total of 40,494 nurses and midwives in Wales, which is 1,275 (3.3 percent) more registered professionals than 12 months previously, and 4,493 (12.5 percent) more than five years ago.

The NHS Wales Bursary Scheme provides funding for nursing students NHS funded courses in Wales. Provided the student nurse agrees to work in Wales for two years post-graduation, under the current arrangements they do not pay tuition fees as the Welsh Government pay these directly to Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). There is also a £1,000 bursary for all, and additional means-tested bursary funding available. Welsh-domiciled students^{4,5} who do not wish to commit to work in Wales on completion of their course, have access to the standard student support package available from Student Finance Wales. Additional funding is available through Coleg Cymraeg for nursing students who submit theoretical assignments through the medium of the Welsh language.

Currently the Welsh Government commissions nursing places in HEIs through Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). Funding is provided to the HEIs per

¹ Latest available data found (as of November 2024)

² Following the abolition of the NHS bursary for healthcare students in England, the number of applicants fell by 21% in 2017 and a further 10% in 2018. After the continued decline in nursing degree applicants, the UK Government announced an annual maintenance grant of at least £5,000 to all nursing students in England from September 2020. Any student nurse planning to work in areas with severe shortages, such as mental health or learning disabilities, also have access to a further £1,000 grant. There is also an additional childcare allowance of £2,000 on offer.

³ <https://www.rcn.org.uk/news-and-events/Press-Releases/new-nurse-numbers-collapsing-in-every-english-region-as-rcn-warns-10-year-plan-at-risk>

⁴ <https://heiw.nhs.wales/education-and-training/nursing-and-midwifery/careers-and-opportunities/nhs-bursary1/>

⁵ Welsh domiciled NHS bursary students where permanent address is in Wales and not the address whilst studying if different

student place to the value of the cost of the tuition fees and additional funding to cover the administrative costs of organising clinical placements.

Scotland

The NMC highlights continued growth in the number of registered nurses and midwives in Scotland, with a total of 73,420. This is an increase of 4,471 (6.5 percent) over the past five years.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Scotland has called for the Scottish government to take action to address the nursing shortage, including:

- Implementing sustainable domestic recruitment and retention planning
- Providing financial support for nursing students.

Audit Scotland⁶ has warned that the Scottish government's current workforce strategy will not resolve the challenges and has called for a clear national strategy for health and social care.

The Scottish Government commissions and funds pre-registration nursing and midwifery programs in Scotland. The Scottish Government also provides financial support for nursing and midwifery students, including:

- A non-repayable bursary of £10,000 per year
- A discretionary fund of £500,000 to support students in need
- £3 million per year for students with children or dependants.

Northern Ireland

There are more nursing and midwifery professionals on the NMC register in Northern Ireland, a total of 28,725. This is an increase of 3,914 (15.8 percent) more than five years ago.

Pre-registration nurse education programmes are currently commissioned by the Department of Health (DoH) and are provided by three Universities.

A non-means tested bursary is available for nursing and midwifery students in Northern Ireland for each year of the three-year course. The DoH in Northern Ireland pays the tuition fees directly to the university.

Registered Children's Nurses and Specialist Community Public Health Nurses

The NMC highlighted that by June 2024, there were 57,014 registered child nurses in the United Kingdom, an increase from 55,062 in March 2022.

However, the data does not indicate whether the registered nurses are working in the field they are registered for.

As of March 2024, the total number of professionals registered as specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) fell to **29,458** (-0.7 percent drop). The NMC

⁶ Audit Scotland (2024) NHS in Scotland 2023. Edinburgh: Audit Scotland.

reported that while there had been increases in Northern Ireland, Wales and most notably in Scotland, in England there continued to be a downward curve.

The total number of combined community specialist practice qualifications (SPQ) had risen, with an increase of 2.9%⁷

Northern Ireland

- Children's nurses - 2,037 (+2.8%)
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurses - 1,257 (+2.8%)

Scotland

- Children's nurses 4,699 - (+1.9%)
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurses - 3,372 (+2.1%)

Wales

- Children's nurses 2,977 (+2.6%)
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurses - 1,848 (+2.4%)

England

- Children's nurses - 47,989 (+2.8%)
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurses - 22,791(-1.5%)

Community Children's Nurses

There is not much information about the number of community children's nurses in the UK, although there is a recognised shortfall to reduce hospital stays and unplanned admissions.

School Nurses

Despite rising numbers of pupils, the number of school nurses in the UK has been declining, with estimates suggesting there are fewer than 1,000 full-time equivalent school nurses in the UK:

- 2022: NHS England reported that there were 1,945 school nurses, with only 852 of those being qualified school nurses
- 2010: There were around 3,000 full-time equivalent school nurses in the UK.

The number of school nurses employed full-time by the NHS fell by 23% or 680 jobs between March 2010 and January 2018, by 2023 it was noted that there had been a 33% decrease in England alone⁸.

⁷ <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/data-reports/july-2024/annual-data-report-march-2024.pdf>

⁸ College of Medicine and Integrated Health, SAPHNA and QNI (2024) A school Nurse in Every School <https://saphna.co/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Round-Table-Report-A-School-Nurse-in-every-School-March-2024-1.pdf>

Health Visitors

England

In 2018 it was noted that NHS posts in England fell from 10,309 in October 2015 to 8,275 by January 2018⁹. The Institute for Health Visiting (iHV) highlighted that by 2022 the number of health visitors in the NHS and non-NHS organisations had declined further to 5,979. A 37% decrease since 2015¹⁰. The decrease in the Public Health Grant and a decrease in the number of training places were contributing factors. By January 2024 the iHV estimated a shortage of 5,000 health visitors in England (a decrease of more than 40% since 2015)¹¹.

Wales

There is limited information about the number of health visitors in Wales. The Welsh Government Vision for Health Visiting in 2019 notes the pressures of an aging workforce, the financial economic climate, as well as specific early years initiatives had depleted the available generic Health Visitor workforce¹².

Scotland

There is not much information about the exact number of health visitors in Scotland. Scotland is however experiencing a shortage of health visitors, which is affecting child welfare and maternal mental health.

In 2019, Scotland had around 2,300 health visitors.

The number of health visitor students in Scotland has decreased by more than half in recent years. In 2017, there were 305 health visitor students, and in 2021, there were 146.

The Scottish Government invested £40 million to recruit and train an additional 500 health visitors to deliver the Universal Health Visiting Pathway (UHVP) by January 2020. The Universal Health Visiting Pathway includes 11 home visits and has been seen to improve parental support, with an improvement in immunisation and breastfeeding rates.

The Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) was introduced in Scotland to improve outcomes for children born to women under 19 years of age, this service was complementary to the Health Visiting service. Once the child reached the age of two years, care was transferred to the Health Visitor as the 'Named Person' for the child under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. A 10year analysis of the FNP was published in 2022¹³.

⁹ Royal College of Nursing (2018) The Best Start in Life: The Future of Children's Health – One Year on. Valuing school nurses and health visitors in England <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/pdf-007000>

¹⁰ Institute of Health Visiting <https://ihv.org.uk/news-and-views/news/health-visitor-workforce-numbers-in-england-reach-an-all-time-low/>

¹¹ Institute of Health Visiting (2024) State of Health Visiting Report 2023 <https://ihv.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/State-of-Health-Visiting-Report-2023-FINAL-VERSION-16.01.24.pdf>

¹² Welsh Government (2019) A Vision for Health Visiting in Wales <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-03/a-vision-for-health-visiting-in-wales.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/family-nurse-partnership-10-year-analysis/>

Northern Ireland

There is not much information about the number of health visitors in Northern Ireland,

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