

# **"It's the best job in the world": 68 years of stories of nursing children**

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# Acknowledgments

## Thank you to:

- Everyone who participated
- Birmingham Children's Hospital Archives and the Library of Birmingham
- Oral History Society
- Funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund
  - thanks to all National Lottery players whose contributions made this project possible.



# The ABPN: a very short introduction

- A UK-based network of children's nurses with a wide membership of experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research.
- Established in 1938 by a group of matrons of children's hospitals.
- **It is the oldest children's nursing association in the world.**
- We have a lot of history. We regularly celebrate children's nursing.

# 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations

- We talked about lots of ideas but settled on undertaking an oral history project. These ideas gave birth to

## **‘Honouring Our Past, Seeing our Future’**

- Commenced in April 2023, aimed to complete by summer 2024.
- Launched at an event attended by children’s nurses from around the UK.

# Getting started



Managed by a small steering group of the Association's Governance and Development Committee and one of the ABPN Fellows.

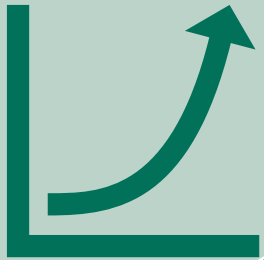


Advice was given by the Oral History Society and through the Project Steering Group



Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

# Aims of the project



Raise awareness of children's nursing and the ABPN



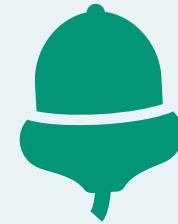
Reach new audiences



Collect narrative histories of children's nursing in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries



Develop our knowledge and skills in oral history



Create a resource for the future.

# Preparation – archiving partner

- Finding an archiving partner was challenging (and delayed start of project).
- Challenges:



- But..... Birmingham Children's Hospital Archives and the Library of Birmingham agreed to archive our project.

# Plan for the project

- This was not a research study but an oral history project.
- Inclusion criteria:
  - to be or have been a practising children's nurse
  - trained or have worked in/with people from the UK.
- Ethics and governance:
  - Written agreement to participate and for the recording and transcript to be stored.

# Data collection



Social media & word of mouth to invite participants



Information sheets sent to those who were interested

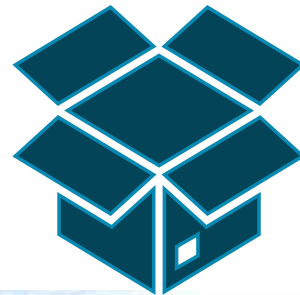


Remote audio-recorded (audio/video) interviews



Draft transcripts created using AI; these required careful checking

Getting stories ready for archiving



# Interviews

- Semi-structured audio-recorded interviews undertaken by three ABPN members\*
- Chatted offline before interview commenced:
  - gained trust
  - checked agreement,
  - reminded participant:
    - they could skip questions,
    - importance of confidentiality re families etc.
- Then commenced audio-recording\*\*.

What first attracted you to children's nursing?

## Prompts

- Your name, date, place of training
- Your training, e.g. what kind of course did you undertake?
- How your career in children's nursing developed
- Tell us one thing you like about children's nursing that you love.
- What was the moment that gave you most pride in children's nursing?
- What do you believe has had the biggest impact on children's nursing?
- What are your hopes for the future of children's nursing?

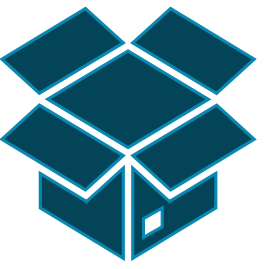
\*\* In a couple of instances, the archived audio story is read by another person on behalf of the participant.

\* Katrina McNamara, Bernie Carter, Norman Long (all members of the ABPN Governance and Development Group)

# Social media: short stories

- Although not a formal (archived) part of the project, children's nurses also shared stories for sharing via social media.
- These stories were accessible almost immediately via the ABPN's YouTube channel.

[https://youtube.com/@ABPN\\_ChildNurse?si=vtNW8EUtFZwG2tcE](https://youtube.com/@ABPN_ChildNurse?si=vtNW8EUtFZwG2tcE)



# Archiving our stories: steep learning curve

- Checking transcripts for accuracy (AI transcription helpful but not reliable)
- Organising stories with accurate catalogue codes (for easy searching)
- Creating summaries
- Working with Ann Daly (Birmingham Children's Hospital Librarian and Archivist)
- Handover day to Ann (29/07/2024)



# What happened next?

- Sent to The Iron Room (Library of Birmingham)
- Technical process of archiving: checking, ‘transfer and ingest’, uploaded to Preservica (long term preservation management) and imported into Calm.
- Comment from Digital Preservation Officer:

“We were fortunate that the digital records arrived in a predetermined logical order and that we were given contextual data that made it easier to identify and summarise the basic informational content quickly”.



QR code (The Iron Room)



The Iron Room  
Archives and Collections @ the Library of Birmingham

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Posted on October 7, 2024

Last August we received a collection of digital records from the Birmingham Children's Hospital's Library and Information Service relating to the above project (Ref: HC BCH/8/1). It was undertaken as part of the Association of British Paediatric Nurses' 85th Anniversary celebrations, with Heritage Lottery Fund support.



QR code (catalogue)

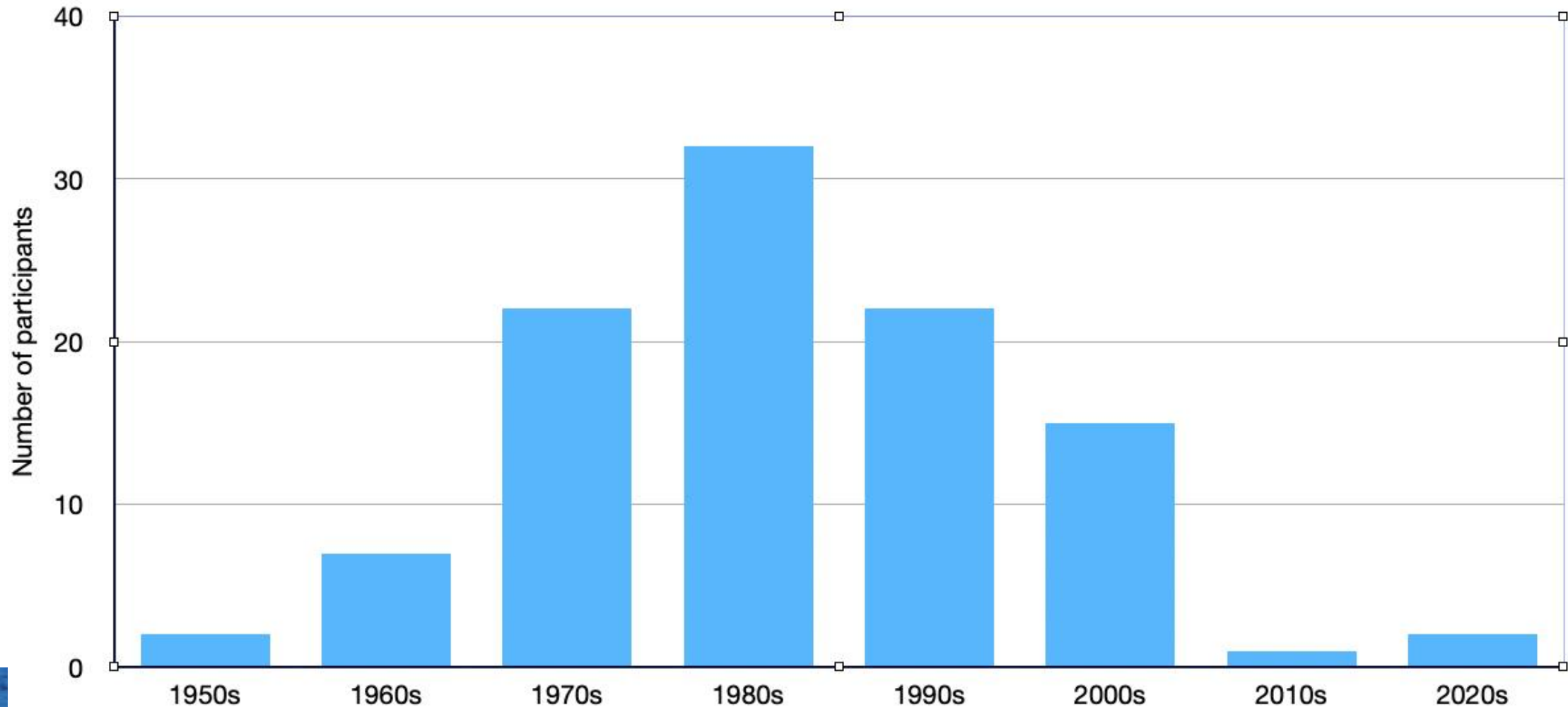
▼ Help	Ref No	<a href="#">HC BCH/8/1</a>
How do I search the catalogue?	Title	'Honouring Our Past, Seeing Our Future: The Oral History Project of the Association of British Paediatric Nurses'
Guides to sources	Date	2023 - 2024
What is in the catalogue?	Level	Series
Access to restricted records	Description	<p>Each interview audio file and transcript has been given a filename that relates to a classification / naming protocol that denotes the decade, region and style of training for each participant, which the Association of British Paediatric Nurses and other project partners felt was useful for the purposes of researchers.</p> <p>Using the example of the first catalogue entry for interviewee Oluwashete Joyce Agboomaname (see HC BCH/8/1/1 below), the interview itself was logged "20-WM-08-Oluwashete Joyce Agboomaname". The protocol denotes for example:</p> <p>[First two digits] 20- = Oluwashete was currently training in the 2020s, i.e. at the time of interview            [First two letters separated by dashes] WM = Oluwashete was training in the West Midlands region</p> <p>Using this protocol the digital audio recording of the interview was given the filename 20-WM-08-Oluwashete Joyce Agboomaname.m4a, the transcript was given the filename 20-WM-08-Oluwashete Joyce Agboomaname.pdf. As another example it can be deduced that the next interviewee, 00-LO-04-Nathan Askew, trained during the 2000s in the London area. Further more detailed information about dates, region, duration and nature of the training can be gleaned from the recordings and transcripts, as well as the interview synopsis / summary which can be found in the Description filed for each catalogue entry.</p>
Contact Us		

# Who took part: some demographics

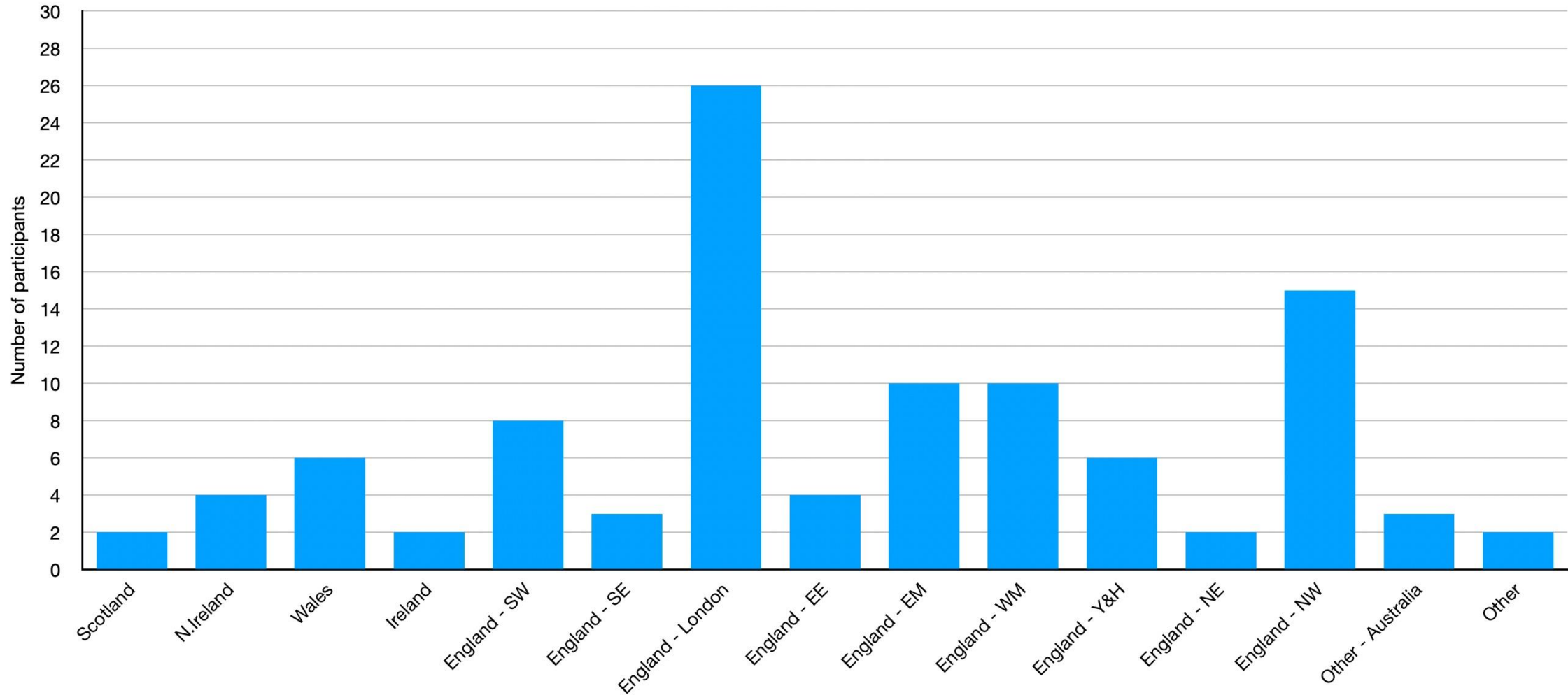
- 103 stories from children's nurses
- Collected within 12 months
- Stories from eight decades

NOTE: not subject to full data cleansing/verification

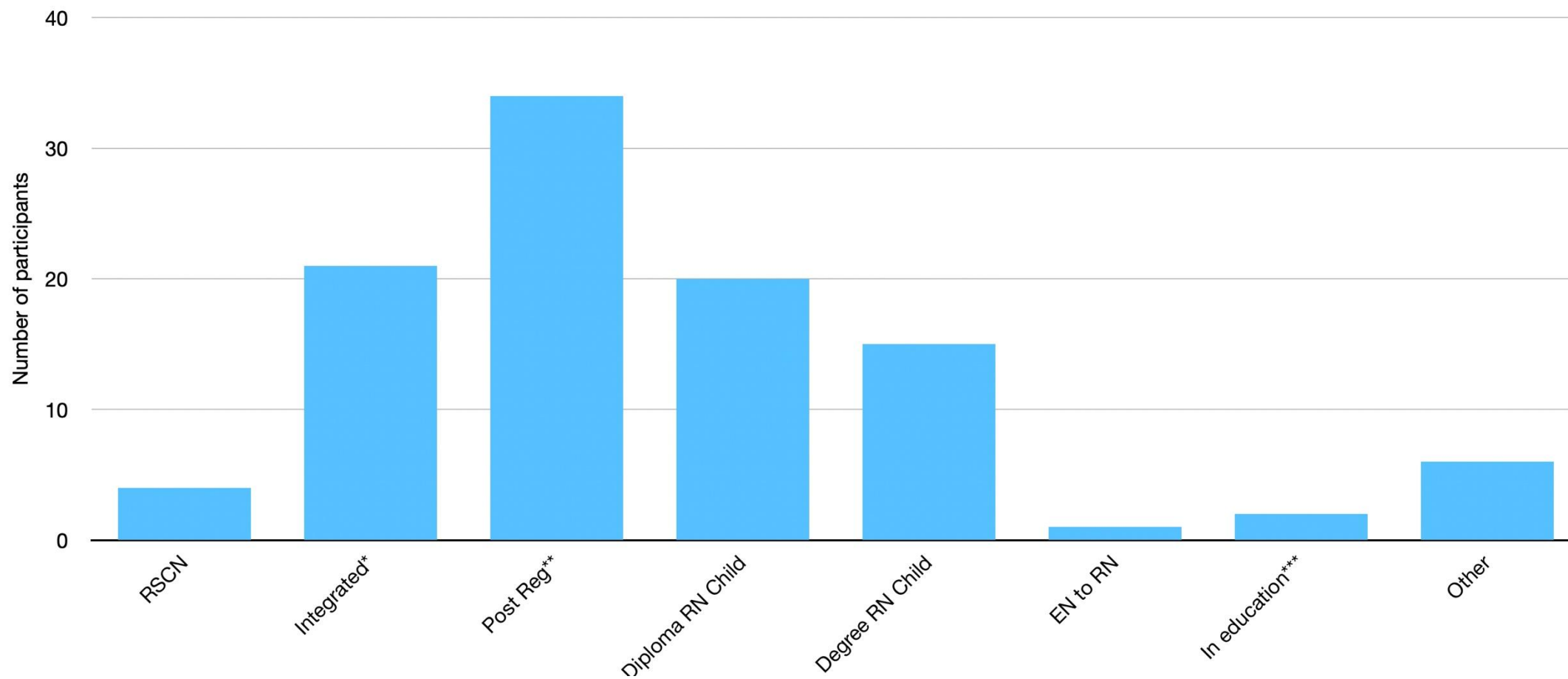
# Decade commenced training



# Where registered training was commenced

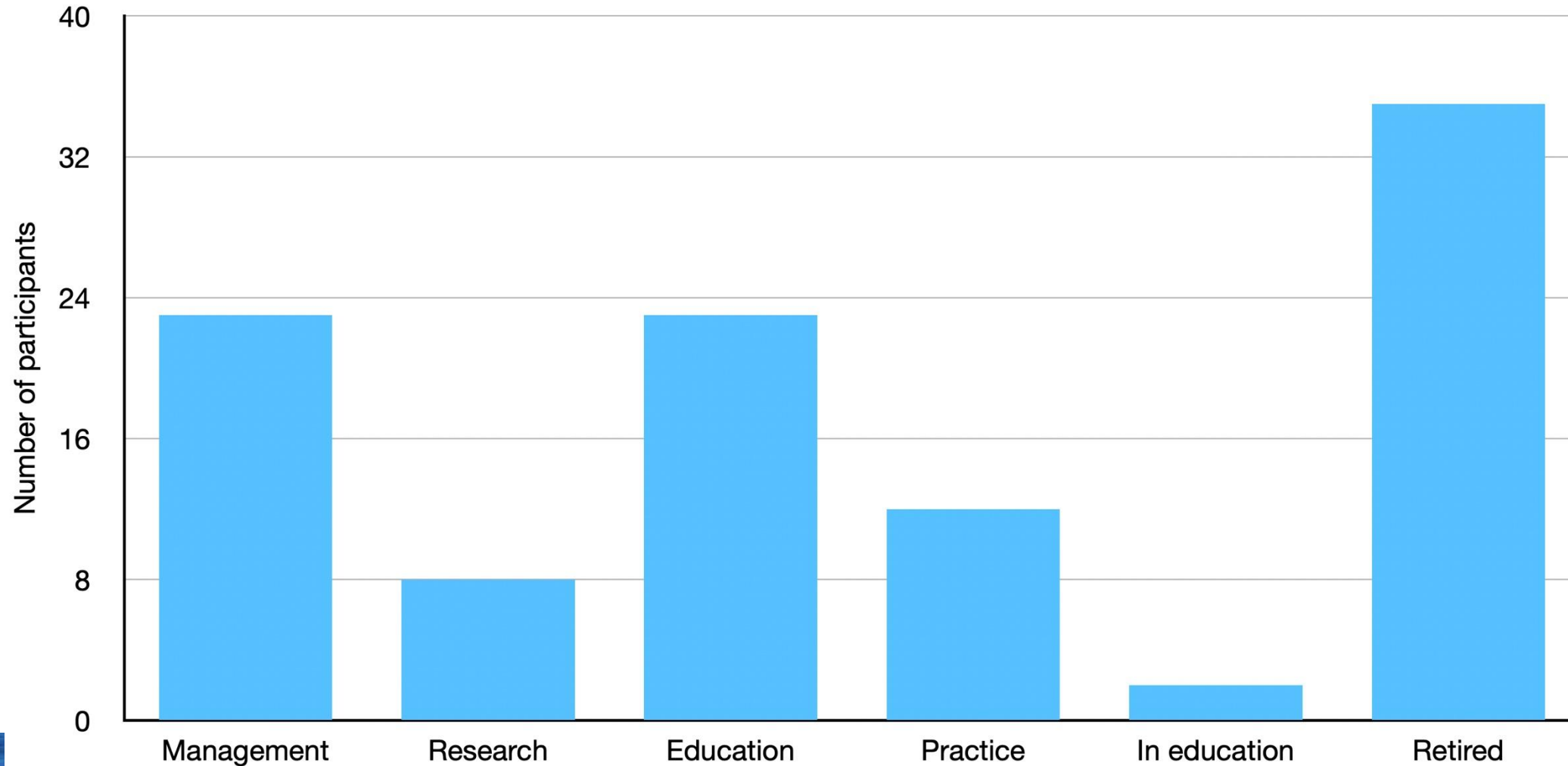


# Type of Child Nurse training



\* Integrated (SRN/RSCN or RGN/RSCN)  
\*\* Post-Reg (SRN or RGN to RSCN or RN)  
\*\*\*Currently in education to train as RN Child

# Role at time of interview

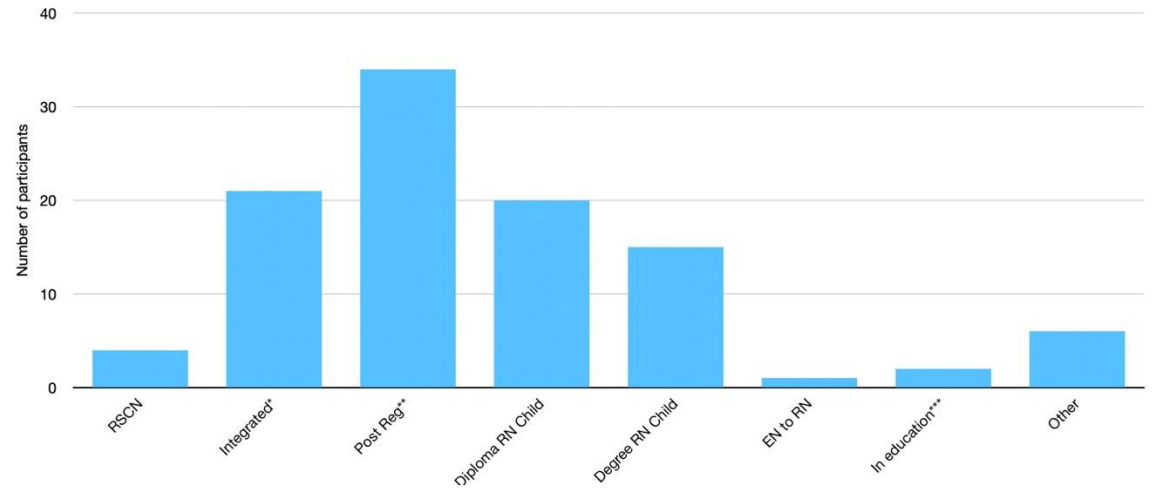


Note: 'retired' stories are a rich mix of achievement as well as ongoing commitment.

# Fascinating stories across eight decades

- You can search the archive
- And then read or download the transcript and/or listen to the audio-recording.
- A rich resource for researching children's nursing.

**Challenge for today's session was what to extract and present!**



# Some stories of starting out

Some of 'us' had a plan, many of 'us' came into children's nursing serendipitously.  
Some of us had to fight to become a nurse, some didn't think they'd be good enough...  
There are lots of stories of how people blossom as children's nurses.....

So, we'll share some stories of routes into children's nursing

# 1970s

I trained as an adult nurse to start with, my parents really didn't want me to nurse. It wasn't a career choice for them....Right from the beginning, I said, 'No, I want to be a nurse'. I started my adult training .... As a third year I went on the paediatric wards at .... and just loved it. I liked the acuteness of the illness side of it. I liked.. [saw]..the joy and happiness and the playing and all the rest of being with children. I think I suddenly realised this was going to be what I wanted to do.

# 1990s

So my first clarity that I wanted to be a children's nurse was when I was about seven years old....So my mum's best friend...had a son who had severe cerebral palsy. And he was about five years younger than me. And we went to visit, they didn't live locally, but we went to visit a lot. And when I was about seven, I was stood watching him have a gastrostomy feed, and wondered, what was that was all about. So his mum said, 'Would I like to have a go'? So, I did and held the tube and, and, you know, was chatting away to him. And that was when I decided that I wanted to help children like him

# 1990s

I did the general nursing training .....and it was in the process of looking for a job, and I was visiting different units..... there was a real shortage of nursing, as it is now..... I had a chat with, with the recruitment lead. .... I was given the opportunity of visiting different areas. .... I remember walking into a children's unit (PICU)...., and the manner in which I was received ..... the activities they were taking on. Instantly... I just made a decision there, this is what I want to do..... this feels like being at home, with their parents, their children, the doctors, the nurses... That's what I wanted to do.

**2000s**

I was working in a children's nursery didn't really know what I wanted to do, and stumbled across an open day for Nottingham University, which I was pushed to go and look into. Nursing had never really been on my radar as such, I didn't think I was clever enough to be a nurse. I didn't think that I could do it. So I went to an open day, and I just fell in love with the course, what it meant for me and yeah, basically got signed up.

**2020s**

I've always loved children. But when I was 13....I had surgeries on my back. So I was actually a patient myself. ....had a lot of nursing interventions.....and seeing all the brilliant nurses there. I think that made me realise I really want to be one of these nurses. And I think that's where it all started. And then from 13 I was like I definitely want to be a children's nurse.

# Some standout moments along the way

# 1980s

..when I was in the neonatal unit we used to have a reunion of all the babies at 1 and 2 years...it was just fantastic to see those little kids. And then I met one of those babies.... at a family event, and her mother said 'Do you not remember you were her nurse in the neonatal unit in London'. And she was in her 20s and just finishing off a degree and going travelling. At the time, we weren't sure if she would survive. And so you know, they're very rewarding moments...when you see that..

# 2020s

I fell in love with children's nursing, not for the salary, not for not for the shift work .....I wanted to do something that I know was giving back to people. And when I fell in love with it, I thought, this is where I'm going to stay for the rest of my career..... Being a children's nurse, .....the most privileged positions .... Memorable moments that stay with you for the rest of your life.... when I've taught students and ..[seeing they're] really enjoying that teaching....how they progress.....and become these amazing children's nurses. ....Getting a PhD, getting work published, receiving that award, [being] promoted.....

# Hopes for the future

# 1960s

[My hope is] we retain the children's nursing branch. And I'm very clear about that, I think that there is all the potential still for this [to go].....But as those of us that are children's nurses are utterly committed to having people with the right qualification in the right place at the right time. And my other issue, which is probably less specific about children,.... is not to lose the link with higher education.

# 1990s

I'm very positive about children's nursing going forward, because the people that I meet are fantastic, and going to be fantastic so that the career itself is in safe hands. In terms of children's nursing, in terms of pain nursing, ...my hopes [are] that we carry on having specialist practice [with research time]. I would love that. ... And it's how we can convince the powers-that-be that identified research time leads to greater effectiveness and more efficiencies.

# 1980s

I hope we don't lose children's nursing....I hope that we can always call ourselves children's nurses, ...to have that identity is important. I hope ...there's more opportunities for [children's] nurses, I hope to develop those who want to develop themselves... if people do want to advance clinically, ...academically, I hope that we're able to support that in the future. But ...recognising not everybody wants to do that, and that's OK.

# What next?

- There are loads of opportunities for people to access the stories and to undertake research and other projects.
- We are happy to share the lessons we learned with other people thinking of undertaking an oral history project

**So, thank you for listening.  
Over to you now for any questions**

# Why not join the Association of British Paediatric Nurses?

**Invest in the future of children's nursing by joining the ABPN**

**The ABPN is a network of children's nurses working in any setting and speciality, including clinical practice, education, leadership and research**

**We are the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938**

**Help to influence nursing care and services for infants, children and young people**

**Check out our activities and campaigns at [www.abpn-uk.com](http://www.abpn-uk.com) and get involved**

