

Standards for safe staffing in Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services for children and young people¹

Purpose

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) aims to promote the development of children's nursing through evidence-based information about practice and education. This position statement has been produced by officers and members of the Association to provide the nursing workforce requirements for health care services accessed by children and young people.

The standards contained within this position statement are the minimum essential recommended for all providers of services for infants, children and young people

Background

The intensity of workload within all services and across all settings continues to increase as a result of changes in complexity of illness, advances in medicine, increased public expectations and changes in how services are configured, such as primary care out-of-hours provision². The Kings Fund highlighted that such changes have resulted in increased numbers attending emergency care departments, with more children and young people requiring assessment, observation and short stays, in acute settings^{3,4}.

The Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) has repeatedly stated that all health services accessed by children and young people must be age appropriate and delivered by suitably educated and skilled practitioners⁵.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) previously clearly defined the nursing workforce and safe standards related to the care of children and young people across all health care provision, including for example acute or mental health settings, community, social care or independent sector provision. The ABPN actively contributed to the first edition of the standards published in 2003⁶, and subsequent iterations^{7,8}. However, any of the RCN publications have over recent years been archived creating a void in the availability of evidence-informed, quality assured standards for practice guidance.

In this document, the ABPN has drawn upon more recent international comparisons in respect of paediatrics including neonates^{9,10}, acknowledging the increasing complexity in the needs of infants, children and young people today.

Safeguarding children and Children in Care Services

- all registered nurses must be trained in Basic Paediatric Life Support skills and safeguarding children to level 3 as defined by the intercollegiate framework¹¹
- a minimum of one practice educator to update all staff

The minimum baseline establishment should be increased by 27 percent to cover annual leave, sickness, study leave, parental leave and other leave¹².

The number of students should not exceed university, and individual clinical areas, agreed numbers [Nursing and Midwifery Council¹³].

Safeguarding Children and Young People Teams^{14,15}

Named Nurse

- A minimum of one dedicated WTE¹⁶ named nurse for safeguarding children and young people for each acute healthcare organization with dedicated clinical nurse safeguarding specialists for each additional site
- For community health care organisations, a minimum of one dedicated WTE¹⁷ named nurse for safeguarding children and young people for a child population of 70,000

Named Midwife

- A minimum of 0.4WTE¹⁸ named midwife for safeguarding should be available in each organization providing maternity services

Designated Nurse

- A minimum of one dedicated WTE¹⁹ designated nurse for a child population of 70,000.

Children in Care Teams²⁰

Named Nurse

- A minimum of one dedicated WTE Named Nurse²¹ for looked after children for each looked after children's provider service.

Designated Nurse

- A minimum of one dedicated WTE²² Designated Nurse Looked After Children for a population of 70,000.

The ABPN believes

- children and young people have a right to be cared for in age-appropriate facilities and by nurses who have the right education, training, knowledge and skills to meet their needs^{23,24,25}
- staffing levels should be reviewed at least once a year²⁶
- local and national workforce planning is essential, encompassing all services and sectors delivering care for children and young people²⁷
- **the standards contained within this position statement are the minimum essential recommended for all providers of services for infants, children and young people**

It is important to review local workforce priorities and responses alongside national workforce policy which can be accessed via national government websites.

Useful websites

NHS England <https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

Department of Health Northern Ireland <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk>

NHS Scotland <https://www.gov.scot/health-and-social-care/>

NHS Wales <https://www.nhs.wales>

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References

¹ The term 'children and young people' is used to refer to infants (neonates), children and young people up to the age of 18, or at the point at which an individual's transition to adult health services is completed

² Kings Fund & Nuffield Trust (2024) Public satisfaction with the NHS and social care in 2023

https://assets.kingsfund.org.uk/f/256914/x/48c40ea52b/public_satisfaction_nhs_social_care_2023_bsa_2024.pdf

³ Kings Fund (2013) Are accident and emergency attendances increasing?

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2013/04/are-accident-and-emergency-attendances-increasing?>

⁴ Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2017) Standards for short stay paediatric assessment units

<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/search?keywords=short+stay+paediatric+assessment+units>

⁵ Association of British Paediatric Nurses Position Statement on Children and Young People's Rights

[abpn_position_statement_children_and_young_peoples_rights.pdf](#) and Background Briefing paper on Children and Young People's Rights [abpn_background_briefing_children_and_young_people.pdf](#)

⁶ Royal College of Nursing (2003) Defining staffing levels for children and young people's services: RCN guidance for clinical professionals and service managers, 1st Edition London: RCN.

⁷ Royal College of Nursing (2007) Defining staffing levels for children and young people's services: RCN guidance for clinical professionals and service managers, 2nd edition, London: RCN.

⁸ Royal College of Nursing (2013) Defining staffing levels for children and young people's services: RCN guidance for clinical professionals and service managers, 3rd edition, London: RCN.

⁹ Ministry of Health, British Columbia August 2024 [https://www.bcnu.org/files/mNPR_Hospital-](https://www.bcnu.org/files/mNPR_Hospital-Based_Care_Setting_Policy_Directive.pdf)

[Based_Care_Setting_Policy_Directive.pdf](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.trustednursestaffing.com/nurse-patient-ratios-by-state/>

¹¹ Royal College of Nursing (2019) Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and competencies for health care staff

¹² Royal College of Nursing (2021) Nursing workforce standards, London: RCN

¹³ Nursing and Midwifery Council (2019) Education and training standards framework for nursing and midwifery education

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-framework-for-nursing-and-midwifery-education/>

¹⁴ All healthcare organisations and providers across the UK have a duty outlined in legislation to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people., as well as to co-operate with other agencies to protect individual children and young people from harm.

¹⁵ Specialist safeguarding/child protection professionals provide expertise and have specific roles and responsibilities in safeguarding/protecting children. The Intercollegiate document see Royal College of Nursing (2019) Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and competencies for health care staff <https://www.rcn.org.uk/Professional-Development/publications/pub-007366>

¹⁶ The minimum WTE named nurse may need to be greater dependent upon the numbers of serious case reviews, the requirement for attendance at safeguarding committees, the requirement to provide safeguarding supervision for other practitioners, the local deprivation indices, the local child population and the number of children subject to child protection plans, the size of the organisation and whether it provides tertiary services

¹⁷ The minimum WTE named nurse may need to be greater dependent upon the numbers of serious case reviews, the requirement for attendance at safeguarding committees, the requirement to provide safeguarding supervision for other practitioners, the local deprivation indices, the local child population and the number of children subject to child protection plans, the size of the organisation and whether it provides tertiary services

¹⁸ The WTE named midwife for safeguarding will vary dependent upon, for example, the number of births, the requirement for attendance at safeguarding committees and local deprivation indices

¹⁹ The minimum WTE designated nurse may need to be greater dependent upon the number of local safeguarding partnerships, sub committees, unitary authorities and clinical commissioning groups covered, the requirement to provide safeguarding supervision for other practitioners, as well as the geographical area covered, the number of children subject to child protection plans and local deprivation indices

²⁰ Services are underpinned by legislation, statutory guidance, and good practice guidance – see Royal College of Nursing (2020) Looked after children: Roles and competencies for health care staff, London: RCN

²¹ If the Named Nurse has a caseload, the maximum caseload should be no more than 50 looked after children held by the Named Nurse and will be dependent on the complexity, geography, population and size of the catchment area served

²² The minimum WTE Designated Nurse Looked After Children may need to be greater dependent upon the number of Local Safeguarding Partnership Boards, sub group committees, unitary authorities and clinical commissioning groups covered, the requirement to provide Looked After Child supervision for other practitioners, as well as the geographical areas covered, the number of children looked after and local deprivation indices

²³ Association of British Paediatric Nurses Position Statement on Children and Young People's Rights [abpn_position_statement_children_and_young_peoples_rights.pdf](#) and Background Briefing paper on Children and Young People's Rights [abpn_background_briefing_children_and_young_people.pdf](#)

²⁴ ABPN Position Statement on Children's Nurse Education [abpn_position_statement_nurse_education_final_24_november_2024.pdf](#) and ABPN Background Paper on Children's Nurse Education [abpn_cn_education_background_paper_final_22nd_november_2024.pdf](#)

²⁵ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/national-standards-for-neonatal-qualified-in-specialty-qis-education/>

²⁶ To recognise changes in service configurations, reductions in lengths of stay, clinical complexity, increasing acuity, children and young people admitted in emotional distress including those who have self-harmed

²⁷ Association of British Paediatric Nurses Workforce planning and nurse staffing position statement [abpn_position_statement_workforce_planning_and_nurse_staffing-final_nov_2024.docx](#) and background briefing paper [abpn_workforce_planning_and_nurse_staffing_background_briefing_paper-final_nov_2024.docx](#)