

# Healthcare and Workforce Planning

## Get it Right - PUBLIC HEALTH PUBLIC SERVICE

**Healthcare services both independent and NHS are delivered by people. NHS Wales itself directly employs over 70,000 people and over three-quarters of the healthcare budget is spent on staffing. Any healthcare strategy from stroke services to reducing waiting times relies for its implementation on the right type of healthcare professional being available and in the right numbers.**

It can therefore be alarming to realise how little attention is given to information, analysis and planning of healthcare staffing levels. The Electronic Staff Record uses outdated categories and urgently needs reform. NHS organisations do not currently employ workforce planners and there is no quality control over the staffing information provided to the Welsh Assembly Government which is often inconsistent in nature.

Bank nursing activity (where nurses work in temporary capacity for the NHS) is not recorded centrally. No information at all is provided to the Welsh Assembly Government on nurses or healthcare support workers employed by general practitioners. No analysis of the labour market outside the NHS for healthcare professionals (which is both a potential supplier and competitor) is made.

What is needed in Wales is an analysis of the staffing required to fulfil national policy. Each 'strategy' produced by the Welsh Assembly Government should also contain a workforce plan. Local Health Boards would then be able to use this to plan their own local delivery of the service. However in order to achieve this the Local Health Boards must first be required to

monitor and supply information on staffing levels in different areas (e.g. how many nurses working in emergency care).

The Welsh Assembly Government funds educational places for pre-registration nursing. An attempt is made to gauge the number of nurses required by the health service. However there is no formal link between the commissioning of educational places and the numbers of nurses the Local Health Boards decide to employ. This is equally true of the funding of post-registration educational places by the Welsh Assembly Government where there is no guarantee that Local Health Boards will subsequently send nurses to these courses.

In an age of scarce resources it is essential that public money is spent in the most effective way possible. Workforce information and analysis can show where changes should be made to benefit patient care. The Scottish Executive produces a National Workforce Plan for NHS Scotland. The production of a similar annual strategy in Wales could allow room for democratic scrutiny by the Assembly.

## KEY POLICY ACTIONS

- The RCN believes that the Welsh Assembly Government should publish an annual Workforce Plan for the NHS.
- The RCN believes that qualified and experienced workforce planners should be employed by the Local Health Boards and the Welsh Assembly Government level and awareness of the benefits and significance of workforce planning and data should be raised with both senior strategic and operational management in NHS organisations across Wales.
- The RCN believes that health statistics in Wales are underdeveloped. A comprehensive review that seeks the views of all stakeholders should be undertaken and a development plan proposed. Capacity should be expanded possibly using the creation of the Local Government Data Unit as a model.
- The RCN believes it essential to gather data about the nursing workforce in the independent sector. Accurate information on the number of healthcare support workers employed across the health and social care spectrum in Wales should also be collated.

