



Coleg Nyrsio Brenhinol
Cymru
Royal College of Nursing
Wales

Pay Review Body NHS Pay Review 2022/2023 Royal College of Nursing Wales (RCN Wales) evidence

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Royal College of Nursing has provided evidence to the Pay Review Body (PRB) relating to the UK-wide position. This paper will provide supporting evidence relating specifically to Wales.
- 1.2 The Royal College of Nursing is calling for a substantial, restorative, pay rise above inflation to address the nursing workforce crisis and the long-term reduction in the value of nursing pay.
- 1.3 Based on our evidence, we urge the PRB to recommend a restorative pay increase of 5% above RPI (Retail Price Index). A pay award at this level is an essential down-payment to restore lost earnings caused by successive years of below inflation pay awards. Our evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates the nursing workforce is in crisis.
- 1.4 The PRB must make recommendations that will support the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. In addition to an initial restorative pay award, we call on the PRB to recommend immediate measures to implement national Retention Premia Payments and Recruitment Premia Payments for the nursing workforce as a matter of urgency to address the ever-worsening workforce crisis.
- 1.5 Nursing needs to be an attractive career. A substantial increase in nursing staff is needed to ensure the delivery of high quality patient care. Put simply, it takes a higher number of nursing staff with a greater level of knowledge and skill to care for a person with a broken hip if they are also physically frail, living with dementia, diabetes, a heart condition, and respiratory illness. Even more so if this person is being cared for at home, alone, or in poor or ill-suited housing conditions. To ensure nursing is seen as an attractive career nursing pay needs to reflect the skills and education achieved by the nursing workforce
- 1.6 In September 2021, 94% of eligible RCN Wales members who voted in our consultative ballot on the NHS pay award said the 3% pay award was unacceptable. In December 2021, 90% of eligible RCN Wales members who voted in our indicative ballot said they'd be willing to take action short of a

strike. This shows the strength of feeling among our NHS members who are bitterly disappointed with the 3% pay award. Nursing staff have not had a decent pay award for the last decade. Last year, the annual rate of RPI reached 4.1% and is increasing even further than that level which is negating this pay award.

1.7 To understand the extent to which nursing staff are under pressure indicators of population need and workforce pressure such as vacancy rates, agency spend, and workload pressure should be considered. A rise in agency nursing and overtime indicate a struggling workforce. We know agency nursing is attractive to many nurses as the pay is often better. With the knowledge that 58.3% of RCN Wales respondents to the employment survey were the main earner within their household it is not surprising that this is a more attractive option. The current vacancy rate, agency spend and overtime will be explored in more depth later in this document.

2. The NHS nursing workforce

2.1 NHS Wales is experiencing nursing shortages as a result of challenges with recruitment and retention.

2.2 Nursing is a safety critical profession yet nursing staff feel as though they cannot fulfil their role to the level they want to whilst facing such a considerable workforce shortage. In the RCN employment survey 2021, 62% of Welsh respondents felt as though they were too busy to provide the level of care they want too.¹

2.3 The current NHS nursing workforce is feeling undervalued, under pressure and underpaid. In the 2021 RCN employment survey, 59% of Welsh respondents expressed that they are considering leaving or planning on leaving the profession. When asked for the reasons as to why they want to leave nursing (tick all that apply), 69% said they felt undervalued, 58% said they were exhausted and 40% said it was due to their stress levels.

2.3.1 “The responsibilities, skills and risks of a qualified nurse are in no way reflected by the pay. My work life balance is not healthy as I need to work overtime just to pay bills. I love my job and my patients, there is no option for a nurse not to put 100% in everyday to ensure safe patient care and every staff member in the NHS is still being pushed to do more, constantly forced into unsafe positions with inadequate support. A more appropriate pay would adequately reflect the skills and passion that people bring to this role, improve staffing levels and the morale of current staff.” **(RCN Wales Member, Mental health nurse)**

¹ This employment survey was of RCN members which was undertaken in October 2021. The survey received 1,556 Welsh responses from registered nurses, health care support workers and students working across all areas of health and social care.

2.4 To ensure nursing remains an attractive career, and to keep the nursing workforce wanting to provide care within the NHS, the nursing workforce deserve a fair and meaningful pay rise.

3 Nursing vacancies

3.1 As mentioned in the introduction the vacancy rate needs to be considered as a key indicator for why nursing pay should be increased. Nursing needs to be seen as an attractive career, a key part of this is ensuring pay reflects the skills and education achieved by the nursing workforce.

3.2 There has been an increase in nursing workload in the last decade as nursing staff are now caring for an ageing population with increased dependency and comorbidities. Patient throughput in hospital has risen sharply, as has bed occupancy. There has also been a significant rise in people being cared for in the community.

3.3 A substantial increase in nursing staff is needed to ensure the delivery of high quality patient care. Put simply, it takes a higher number of nursing staff with a greater level of knowledge and skill to care for a person with a broken hip if they are also physically frail, living with dementia, diabetes, a heart condition, and respiratory illness. Even more so if this person is being cared for at home, alone, or in poor or ill-suited housing conditions. As expressed, nursing pay needs to reflect their skills, abilities and education.

3.4 Significant nursing vacancies compromise the delivery of safe and effective care and hinders nursing staff in driving forward service improvement and addressing health inequalities.

3.5 Research conducted by Anne Marie Rafferty et al. found that patients in hospitals with the highest patient to nurse ratios had a 26% higher mortality rate.²

3.6 The Welsh Government and/or NHS Wales fail to publish national figures for nursing vacancies even though the vacancy rate is a critical indicator of the pressures faced by health boards. Vacancies rates are published in Northern Ireland, Scotland and England.

3.7 In the absence of any official data, the Royal College of Nursing Wales has estimated that there is a minimum of 1,719 registered nurse vacancies in Wales. This has risen by 107, from 1,612 in November 2020.

3.8 There is no available data for healthcare support worker (HCSW) vacancies.

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17064706/>

4 Agency nurse spending

- 4.1 A rise in agency nursing and overtime indicate a struggling workforce. We know agency nursing is attractive to many nurses as the pay is often better. With the knowledge that 58.3% of RCN Wales respondents to the employment survey were the main earner within their household it is not surprising that this is a more attractive option.
- 4.2 However agency nursing is expensive and while there will always be a need for agency nursing to cover short term sickness or provide maternity cover, the rate at which the NHS is using agency nursing is unsustainable. Agency nursing is not a permanent solution for patient care as agency nurses are less familiar with ward layout, policies and equipment and less able to provide continuity of care. To reduce the level of agency spending, NHS nursing pay needs to be increased.
- 4.3 In 2019, £69.04 million was spent on agency nursing. This would pay the salaries of 2,691 newly qualified nurses.
- 4.4 Audit Wales publish data on the overall agency spend (including nursing and midwifery, doctors, allied health professionals etc). In 2020-2021 the total spend was £199 million, £112m of this was due to the vacancy rate³. Therefore it is not unrealistic to expect that agency nursing spend also increased during this period.
- 4.5 It is known that nurses often leave the NHS for agency working due to the ability to choose their own hours and for higher pay. A fair and meaningful pay rise would reduce the attractiveness of agency working and save public money.

5 Overtime

- 5.1 In the 2021 RCN employment survey, 73.5% of Welsh members reported working additional hours every week. The most common response when asked how many additional hours do they work every week was 3-6. The survey was previously run in 2019 at which point the most common answer for how many additional hours do you work every week was 1-4. The rise in the number of additional hours nursing staff are working is troubling.
- 5.2 In March 2021 there were 22,549 FTE registered nurses employed by NHS Wales. In 2019 76% work overtime at least once a week, that equates to 17,142 nurses. Supposing these nurses worked just two additional hours a week, the NHS would receive 34,284 additional hours of work in that one week. The equivalent of 914 full-time registered nurses (based on a contract of 37.5 hours).

³ [NHS Wales Finances Data Tool](#)

5.3 If we take the new 2021 employment survey information of 73.5% of registered nurses (16,578) working 3-6 additional hours. If 73.5% of the workforce work at least 4 hours of overtime this equates to 1,768 full time nurses.

5.4 In 2020/2021 six of seven health boards collectively spent over £23m on nursing and midwifery overtime – a rise of £10 million from 2019/2020. According to the 2021 employment survey 42% of additional hours were not paid. This indicates the £23m is actually an underrepresentation of how many additional hours are worked by nursing staff.

5.4.1 “I work a minimum of 40 hours a week and do not get paid overtime and [it’s] difficult to take TOIL [Time off in Lieu] and use annual leave.” (RCN Wales Member, Senior Nurse/Matron)

5.4.2 “You may think from all this moaning that I do not enjoy my job but I do love the challenge that confronts me each day. It just can be exhausting when we do not have back up from managers who constantly are concerned about overtime. Staff provide excellent care but it cannot be provided in 7.5 hours due to the number of patient and complexity on the caseload... Staff do not get paid but get TOIL. We feel undervalued’ (RCN Wales Member, District Nurse)

5.5 Many nursing staff receive time off in lieu (TOIL) for the additional hours they work, but they experience challenges in taking this and they also struggle to take their annual leave. According to the employment survey (2021), a third of Welsh respondents did not request their full annual leave, asked to delay their leave, were unable to take it or ended up working.

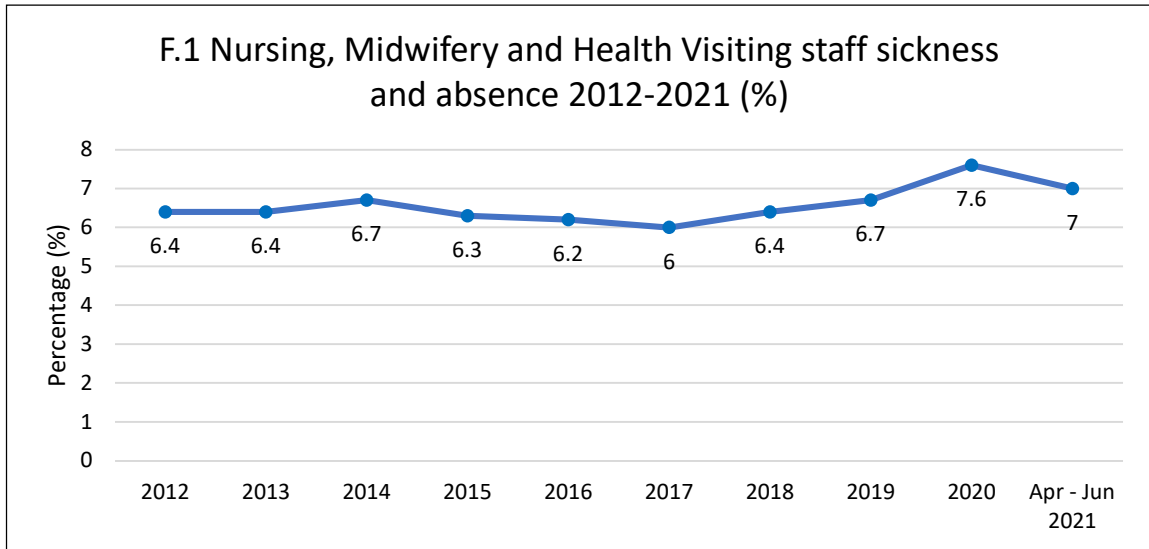
5.6 The increase in number of additional hours worked is very concerning and demonstrates a high reliance on nursing good will. This is unsustainable.

6 Sickness and absence rate

6.1 Anne Marie Rafferty et al. found that nurses in hospitals where patient ratios were higher were approximately twice as likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs, to show high burnout levels, and to report low or deteriorating quality of care on their wards and hospitals.⁴

6.2 The Welsh Government publish quarterly staff sickness and absence rate. The table below shows the level of nursing, midwifery and health visiting sickness and absence percentage from 2012 until April - June 2021.

⁴ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17064706/>

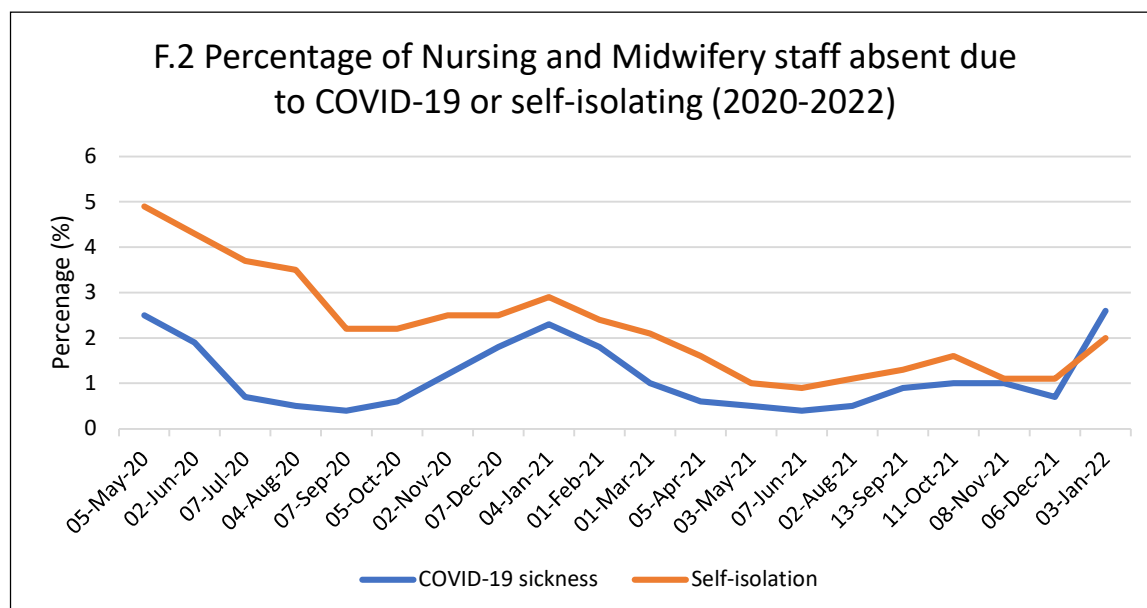


6.3 The combination of vacancies rates, challenges in retention, sickness rates and a reliance on nurses good will is not sustainable.

7 COVID-19 impact

7.1 Nursing staff have been at the forefront of the response to COVID-19 pandemic by providing; complex clinical care, vaccinations, communication, triaging, as well as psychological support of patients, their families and colleagues. Nursing staff have been directly and indirectly impacted by changes in service delivery, with many redeployed into new roles, quickly adapting to new environments and roles. Nursing staff have also faced the risk of infection, as well as anxieties and stress concerning their workload and the impact of the pandemic on their families.

7.2 The table below (F.2) shows the percentage of nursing and midwifery staff that have been absent from work during the period of 5 May 2020 – 3 January 2022 due to COVID-19 or self-isolating.



7.3 The additional pressure and risks associated with dealing with various waves of COVID-19 has had an even greater impact on recruitment and retention for all nursing staff.

7.4 In July 2020, the Royal College of Nursing launched a nationwide survey into working conditions and pay. The RCN received 42,000 responses including 2,011 responses from Wales. Three quarters of Welsh respondents (75.9%) reported experiencing an increase in stress levels, whilst over half (58%) voiced that staff morale had worsened.

7.4.1 “Constant threat of redeployment at any time to fill gaps in rotas. Since COVID patients and families are waiting so long to access care, so many distressed people, families are calling daily, the calls are heart-breaking. The aggression is increasing and I am not sure how much more I can take”
(RCN Wales Member, Clinical nurse specialist)

7.5 The combination of stress and reduced morale is not conducive to a happy work environment and may lead to a worsening of the workforce shortage as nursing staff consider leaving the profession.

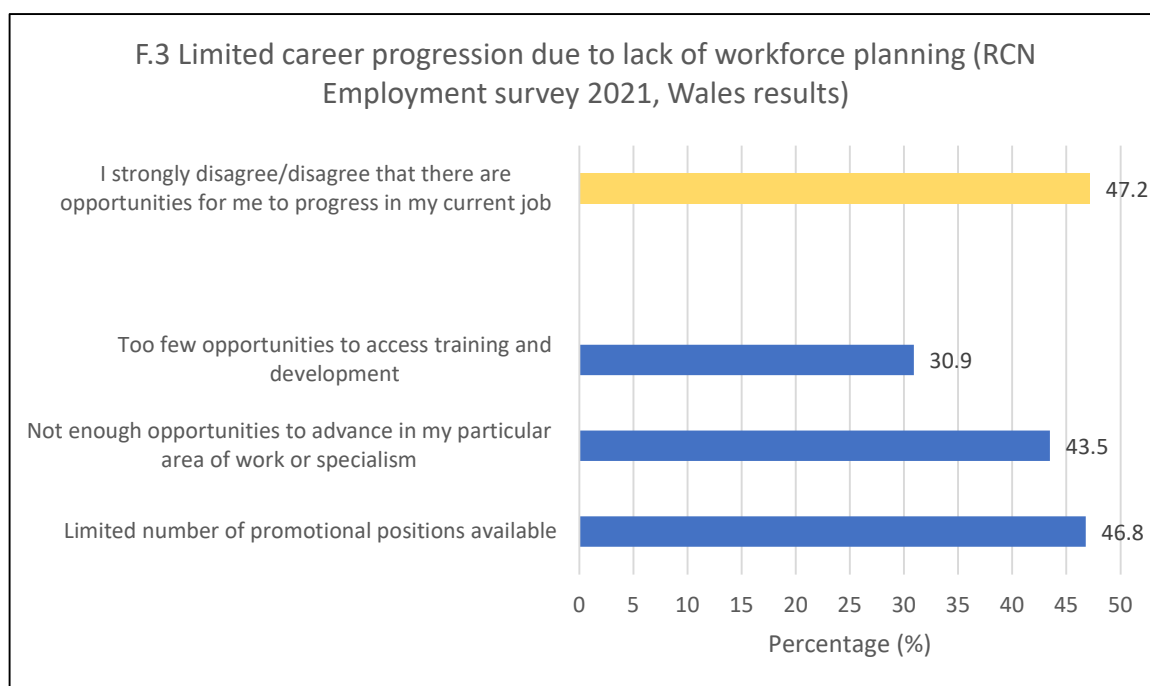
8 Agenda for Change (AfC)

8.1 As a pay structure, Agenda for Change ensures equal pay for work of equal value, as it is underpinned by an analytical job evaluation scheme. Job evaluation is a key component of AfC and it is important that job profiles are kept up to date to reflect the complexity of modern nursing. As highlighted in the RCN’s report *Gender and Nursing as a Profession: Valuing nurses and paying them their worth*, there are problems with AfC job evaluation structures

which fail to accurately and fully measure the technical, productive, cognitive and emotional aspects of the nursing role.⁵ On this basis, the RCN has requested that the NHS Staff Council undertake a review of national nursing profiles as a matter of urgency. The Welsh Government, alongside Scotland and Northern Ireland are represented on the NHS Staff Council.

8.2 The Job Evaluation Group is due to commence work on this review in 2022 and we will report back to the PRB on progress.

8.3 There are other issues which impact on pay and career progression more substantively than the AfC pay structure, particularly related to workforce planning, how nurses are deployed and whether there are adequate opportunities to progress. This is demonstrated in the findings below taken from the 2021 RCN Employment Survey (Wales results) which highlight that the scope for career progression is largely limited by workforce planning and the restricted number of posts available to nursing staff.



8.4 47.2% of Welsh respondents felt as though there was no career progression for them in their current job.

8.5 There is a concentration of registered nurses employed at Band 5 positions, with 46% of NHS nurses in Wales employed at Band 5.⁶ If nurses are not deployed to fully utilise their potential, this cannot be recognised by the pay structure.

⁵ www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-007954

⁶ Royal College of Nursing Wales, *Nursing in Numbers*, 2021.

8.6 Job evaluation is a tool to facilitate career progression. In particular, it is important that employers recognise enhanced practice in skill mix and workforce planning.

9 Recruitment and Retention Premia

9.1 Recruitment and retention premia where market pressures arise. In addition, the PRB can recommend a national recruitment and retention premia for particular groups of staff where there are national recruitment and retention pressures.

9.2 We have demonstrated above the level of staffing crisis that exists within the NHS at this time and in addition to an appropriate pay award, we call upon the PRB to recommend a national recruitment and retention premia for the nursing workforce.

9.3 We consider this the only means of stability for our profession and without a premia of this nature, the health and social care workforce will continue to haemorrhage staff and further still, compromise patient safety.

9.4 The cumulative impact of decade-long wage stagnation, combined with soaring cost of living pressures point to the need for a significant pay uplift as part of an overall package of measures to address the workforce crisis.

9.5 The RCN calls on the PRB to recommend an above inflation increase:

- so that nursing and other NHS staff can cope with rising and rapidly fluctuating costs which may continue to increase significantly over the pay year
- begin restoration of 'lost ground' against inflation as part of an overall commitment to pay restoration with a clear timetable/timescale and with 2022-2023 being a significant 'down-payment'
- absorb the impact of increases to pension contributions

10 Economic challenges

10.1 The RCN Employment survey (2021) found that 58.3% of Welsh respondents reported that they took home more than half or all the household income. demonstrating the importance of nursing staff pay in supporting their household.

10.1.1 "My wife is a band three support worker with the psychiatric liaison service. That is a very complex role. Our 20 year old daughter recently started working in a sushi stand in our local supermarket. Within two years our 20 year old will earn more filleting salmon than my wife will looking after people" **(RCN North Wales member, 2021)**

10.2 HCSW are a valuable part of the nursing team, providing support and care for patients and are crucial for ensuring safe and effective care, and yet their pay does not reflect this.

10.3 Furthermore, analysis of the England workforce shows that average earnings (which include overtime, shift work payments and geographical allowances) have failed to keep up with the cost of living over the last decade. The cumulative effect of this weak growth is that nurses and health visitors have seen an average 8% real terms gap and HCSW have lost 4.3% on total earnings. Despite being taken from the English workforce the information is useful in providing an indication of the real terms gap in Wales as well.

10.4 In addition, in the short term NHS staff are facing significant financial pressures with the most significant recent and forecast rise in household costs coming from increases in gas and electricity prices. The cap on tariffs which is set by Ofgem rose in October 2021 to a record high and is set to rise again in April 2022 meaning a further hike in bills. The Bank of England expects the caps to increase from their current level by 20% for electricity and 35% for gas, leading to year-on-year energy inflation rates of 31% and 58% respectively in April.

10.5 There is a clear need to financially support the nursing workforce in Wales. Not only is the NHS the largest employer in Wales, the nursing workforce represents over a third of all those employed by NHS Wales. By providing a pay rise to the nursing workforce this would greatly improve the financial situation for families and communities across Wales.

10.5.1 This job has an enormous financial impact on family life. I've been with my partner for two years and our first holiday together was last week, when we went to Cardiff under the current COVID-19 regulations for Wales. Even before this year we'd have to think twice about a family holiday with my partner's children, or a night out at the cinema or theatre. Our big purchases like cars tend to be well-used or preowned. With Christmas approaching I have to think about dipping into my savings. We are solvent but we live on that fine line. Financial sacrifices certainly have to be made in this job. If I was in another job in another time I would have retired by now. **(RCN Wales member, 2021)**

10.6 The annual inflation rate (RPI) for 2021 reached 4.1% which has meant a below inflation pay award for 2021-22. Inflation rates in 2022 are forecast to reach even further than this level, and combined with the rise in national insurance contributions of 1.25%, nursing staff are expectant of an above inflation pay award to help manage rising cost of living.

- 10.7 The average age of a nursing student in the UK is 29. A UK wide RCN survey found that 31% of nursing students had dependent children, 10% were single parents and 23% were caring for a sick, disabled or elderly relative.⁷
- 10.8 There has been a marked increase in mature nursing student in Wales. The number of students accepted onto a nursing degree aged 30-34 has increased by 22% since 2019 and the number of students aged 35 or older has increased by 10%.⁸
- 10.9 There are 25,822 registered nurses working for NHS Wales (July 2021). 46% of these are Band 5, earning between £25,655 to £31,533 after 4 years. This is £13.15 an hour, before tax. A nurse with over 4 years' experience will earn a maximum of £16.17 an hour.
- 10.9.1 Nurses are wondering if it's worth the effort, trauma and stress, when they could earn roughly the same amount of money working in a supermarket **(RCN Wales member, 2021)**
- 10.10 Furthermore, in the short term, NHS staff are facing significant financial pressures with the most significant recent and forecast rise in household costs coming from increases in gas and electricity prices. The cap on tariffs which is set by Ofgem rose in October 2021 to a record high and is set to rise again in April 2022 meaning a further hike in bills. The Bank of England expects the caps to increase from their current level by 20% for electricity and 35% for gas, leading to year-on-year energy inflation rates of 31% and 58% respectively in April. With the information that a higher proportion of nursing staff in Wales are the main or primary breadwinner for their family this will disproportionately affect nursing staff, and families in Wales.
- 10.11 It is important that the nursing workforce and nursing students feel financially secure within their careers. By providing a fair and meaningful pay rise this would considerably reduce the need for the nursing workforce to seek secondary employment and easing anxieties regarding pay for everyone, but importantly for those that are a main breadwinner in their household.
- 10.12 For more information regarding the economic and demographics of the nursing workforce please see the RCN evidence submitted to the Pay Review Body.

⁷ Royal College of Nursing, 2016. 'Changing how health care education is funded', funded <https://www.rcn.org.uk/about-us/our-influencing-work/policy-briefings/CONR-2316>. Accessed 10 January 2022.

⁸ [UCAS Undergraduate sector-level end of cycle data resources 2021 | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The Royal College of Nursing is calling for a substantial, restorative, pay rise above inflation to address the nursing workforce crisis and the long-term reduction in the value of nursing pay.
- 11.2 During the COVID-19 pandemic, the nursing workforce provided clinically complex care, showed leadership and compassion, supported their colleagues, patients and families.
- 11.3 The nursing workforce in Wales is tired, feeling undervalued, under-pressure and burning out. The amount spent on agency fees combined with the reliance on nursing staff goodwill to work overtime is unsustainable.
- 11.4 Wales has a chronic workforce shortage and despite various efforts by health boards it is failing to attract sufficient number of individuals into the nursing profession.
- 11.5 The Welsh Government must tackle these existing workforce shortages and ensure that nursing is an attractive career option, well-paid and meaningfully supported. This should be done by ensuring fair pay for nursing, a retention strategy and increasing financially sustainable routes into nursing education.
- 11.6 Based on our evidence, we urge the PRB to recommend a restorative pay increase of 5% above RPI (Retail Price Index). A pay award at this level is an essential down-payment to restore lost earnings caused by successive years of below inflation pay awards. Our evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates the nursing workforce is in crisis.
- 11.7 The PRB must make recommendations that will support the recruitment and retention of nursing staff. In addition to an initial restorative pay award, we call on the PRB to recommend immediate measures to implement national Retention Premia Payments and Recruitment Premia Payments for the nursing workforce as a matter of urgency to address the ever-worsening workforce crisis.

About the Royal College of Nursing (RCN)

The Royal College of Nursing is the world's largest professional organisation and trade union for nursing, representing over 465,000 nurses, midwives, health visitors, healthcare support workers and nursing students, including over 27,000 members in Wales. RCN members work in both the independent sector and the NHS. Around two-thirds of our members are based in the community. The RCN is a UK-wide organisation, with National Boards in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in nursing practice and shapes health and social care policy.

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