RCN Submission to the Pay Review Body 2019-20

This year's submission from the Royal College of Nursing sets out to support the joint union submission, which describes the need for effective, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the separate pay deals in Scotland, Wales and England as well as rapid progress towards a meaningful pay uplift in Northern Ireland.

This follows the remit letter from the Secretary of State of Health which instructs the NHS Pay Review Body not make any pay recommendations, but to ask members to monitor the implementation of the deal and its impact over the duration of the agreement. While this remit only covers England, the RCN is committed to monitoring the implementation of the three pay agreements in England, Scotland and Wales.

The RCN submission includes this year's Labour Market Review which highlights the main trends and developments in the nursing workforce and shows that:

- There are now more leavers than joiners to the Nursing and Midwifery Council
- The number of registered nurses in employment across all settings in the UK has dropped by 5.2% between 2016 and 2018
- The number of registered nurses, health visitors and midwives (full-time equivalents) in the four NHS systems across the UK remained static between 2016 and 2017 while the nursing support workforce grew by just 2.2%. The whole workforce grew by 2.3%.
- Average annual earnings among registered nurses have grown by just 8.1% and by 11.4% among the nursing support workforce between 2010 and 2018, compared to cumulative RPI inflation of 28.3%.
- Applications to study nursing are down by 9% since between 2017 and 2018

We would also like to draw attention to the rising number of vacancies across the NHS. Although there are no official vacancy statistics for England, according to NHS Improvement, the total number of vacancies among the nursing workforce has risen by 9% to 41,722 between the first quarter of 2017 and the first quarter of 2018. Of these vacancies, it is estimated that 80% are being filled by a combination of bank (64%) and agency staff (36%), leaving over 8,300 vacancies unfilled.   Over this period, the vacancy rate has grown from 10.9% to 11.8%. While no data is available for Wales or Northern Ireland, there is a 4.5% vacancy rate among the nursing workforce in Scotland. Compared to the UK economy as a whole, there were 2.8 vacancies for every 100 post filled in the third quarter of 2018[1].

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[1] Office for National Statistics *UK Labour Market November 2018*
www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/latest#vacancies

Research undertaken by the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR) shows that nursing staff from the European Economic Area (EEA) are being driven away due to uncertainty over their future rights in the wake of the Brexit vote[2]. In the year after the referendum, the number of EEA nurses joining the NMC register fell 32% from 9,389 in 2015/16 to 6,382 in 2016/17. Over the same period, there was a 55% increase in EEA nurses leaving the register, from 1,981 to 3,081. The NIESR report estimates a potential loss of an additional 5,000 to 10,000 nurses by the end of the Brexit transition period in 2021.

These statistics illustrate the size of the challenge presently facing the NHS. Moreover, further analysis shows the very real impact on the workforce in terms of their own safety, wellbeing and morale and their ability to deliver safe care. Staff shortages are impacting upon NHS organisations' ability to adequately staff departments and services, leading in some cases to the closure of services.

These findings show the pressing need for urgent action in workforce planning, the recruitment and retention of nursing staff and a commitment to safe and effective staffing levels. While the three pay agreements will not make up for the total loss in earnings experienced by nursing staff as a result of pay restraint in the NHS, the RCN is hopeful that they will start to make up for lost ground and provide a foundation for attracting new recruits, retaining existing staff and ensuring safe staffing levels.

This submission supports the joint union submission in setting out the need for robust evidence gathering in implementing the pay deals as well as facilitating more comprehensive understanding of workforce data. It is important that monitoring arrangements are established in partnership with trade unions to ensure that there is clarity over how data is collected, analysed and interpreted. This will improve confidence in the evidence presented to the PRB by all parties.

In summary, the RCN calls on the PRB to:

- Support progress to achieve a meaningful pay rise for staff in NHS
- Support a clear and robust approach to data gathering on workforce data in order ensure confidence in the implementation of the pay deals and to support better understanding of workforce trends

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[2] National Institute for Economic and Social Research (2018) *Brexit and the Health and Social Care Workforce in the UK*
www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/brexit-and-the-nhs-eu-workforce/the-cavendish-coalition/resources-and-guidance