



Royal College
of Nursing
London

BETTER HOMES FOR NURSES

***IDEAS TO SUPPORT LONDON'S
NURSING COMMUNITY TO LIVE
AND WORK IN THE CAPITAL***





INTRODUCTION



A key challenge facing London nursing in 2016 has been how health employers can recruit and retain enough nursing staff to deliver safe care in a city where patient demand and the cost of living are both rising faster than ever.

For nursing staff, affordability of essential services has become a key part of the debate. With the Government forcing through a real terms pay cut for health staff year after year, local employers and trade unions in London are working in partnership to find alternative solutions to help staff deal with the growing cost of housing, transport and childcare.

In this context we asked RCN members working in London to complete a survey of how these pressures are affecting their lives and those of their patients. Almost

1400 members took part, representing nursing at all levels in the NHS, independent and educational sectors in every part of London.

The results show that the spiralling cost of housing is directly contributing to the recruitment crisis faced by our region's health service. With staffing shortages in London getting worse by the year, while patient need continues to go up, essential services are being stretched to breaking point.

Local political stakeholders need to show real leadership and ensure that nursing staff and low paid health staff are able to live and work here in the capital in the numbers needed to keep patients safe.



As part of the survey we asked RCN members to tell us what changes would most help them with the cost of living. Based on their responses we have identified priority recommendations to help address London's healthcare recruitment crisis.

We want to see London's key worker housing regulations reintroduced and strengthened; new homes which are built on NHS land to be offered first to NHS staff; and discounted travel for London health staff to help them with the costs of getting to and from work.

Our call for action builds on previous partnership working to try and address London recruitment challenges, including through NHS England's Capital Nurse Programme and the London NHS

Partnership's recent report, "London Life for NHS Workers". This report also builds on RCN London's own campaign to highlight the shortage of nursing staff in the capital.

RCN London will continue to work with employers, health sector leaders and local political stakeholders to make the case for better support for nursing and health care staff working in the capital. If things are left as they are at present then health care workers providing essential services will be forced out, and the health of all Londoners will be put at risk.

Bernell Bussue
Regional Director, RCN London
June 2016

RCN LONDON HOUSING SURVEY: RESULTS

ONLINE SURVEY OF 1399 RCN MEMBERS WORKING IN GREATER LONDON
Undertaken November 2015

Which types of transport do you use to get to work?



Car **36%**



Bus **49%**



Walk **27%**



Bicycle **6%**



London
Underground **42%**



London
Overground **15%**



National
Rail **21%**



Where did you train to be a nurse?

- In London **49%**
- Elsewhere in the UK **21%**
- Europe **8%**
- Outside the EU **19%**

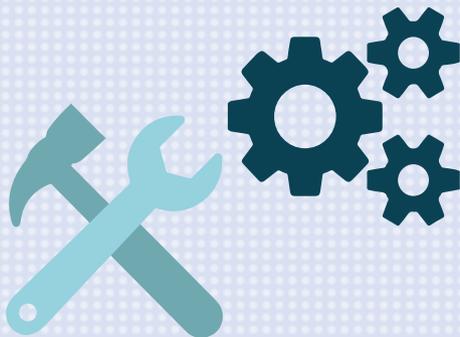


Which best describes your housing situation?

- Owner occupied **35%**
- Local authority rented **16%**
- Private rented **39%**
- Part buy / part rent **3%**
- Employer provided accommodation **3%**

Who do you share your home with?

- Live alone **15%**
- With partner **49%**
- With dependent children **31%**
- With grown up children **16%**
- With parent **3%**
- Share with friends **7%**
- Share with strangers **7%**



Have you faced the following problems in the past year?

- Damp / mould **51%**
- Electrical problems **31%**
- Overcrowding **20%**
- Pest infestation **25%**
- Heating problems **44%**

HOW DOES LONDON HOUSING AFFECT NURSING STAFF AND THEIR PATIENTS?

RESPONSES FROM RCN MEMBERS WORKING IN THE CAPITAL

“Even though I am from London and have lived here all my life, I am currently trying to decide whether to continue nursing and move out of London, or leave nursing and look for a higher paid job in order to stay. I can’t currently afford to cover my basic living costs without working overtime every week.”

“Having to share with friends because you cannot afford to live alone is immensely difficult when working shifts in a stressful, emotionally difficult job. I work in one of the most expensive areas of London and it would be impossible for me to rent privately there. ‘Affordable housing’ is out of reach of most NHS staff.”

“The cost of housing is causing nurses to leave London. My friends and I are all Irish and we will all be moving home in the next 5 years as we cannot afford to buy in a reasonable commuting distance to work.”

WHAT WILL THE COST OF LIVING MEAN FOR LONDON NURSES IN THE FUTURE?

RESPONSES FROM RCN MEMBERS WORKING IN THE CAPITAL

“I am fortunate that I am coming to the end of my career and was able to buy whilst housing was still affordable. My son is training to be a nurse and the likelihood of him being able to afford a decent house is remote. In the longer term this will be a problem for society too as the younger nurses will move away from ageing parents and social services will have to pick up the pieces.”

“I love working in London and all my family is here. However due to the housing market and rent costs I feel I am being pushed out. Not to mention the low income (part time without any raises), travel expenses and to top it off the NMC fees raise – we are having to use our savings to get by.”

“I don’t understand how the NHS can be so short sighted about housing costs, among other necessities for key workers. Unless the government improves pay and conditions for nurses the hospitals will have to continue to recruit from abroad.”

THE COST OF HOUSING IS CONTRIBUTING TO LONDON'S NURSING RECRUITMENT CRISIS

AND AFTER A REAL TERMS NHS PAY CUT OF 14%, NURSES ARE FINDING IT EVEN HARDER TO LIVE IN THE CAPITAL

79%

of RCN members working in London say they worry about the cost of their accommodation



76%

say housing takes up a bigger share of their income than five years ago, but only 8% receive housing support from their employers

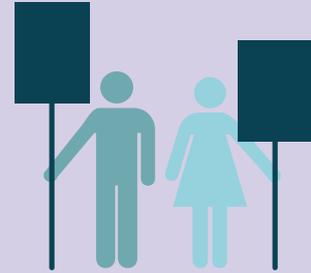
43%

of the average London nurse's pay now goes on housing, with a further 7% on transport



74%

say recent Government decisions on nurses' pay have made it more difficult for them to live in London



66%

say the cost of housing has caused them to consider leaving London for work.

40%

say they will probably or definitely leave London in the next 5 years



75%

of RCN members agreed with the statement "If my housing needs were better met I would be more likely to stay in nursing in London"

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

RESPONSES FROM RCN MEMBERS WORKING IN THE CAPITAL

“Nurses’ pay needs to be raised and also nurses need greater assistance with finances to be able to afford housing. The cost of housing really has a negative impact on your family, which impacts on you as a mother and a nurse.”

“Nursing staff should be considered a priority when it comes to housing. We have one of the most essential roles within the health service. As it stands my rent takes up half of my income. It is an outrage that we should be charged so much.”

“The proposal to charge market rents for those in social housing should not apply to key workers. My rent is due to quadruple which will affect me and my family, as I am the breadwinner.”

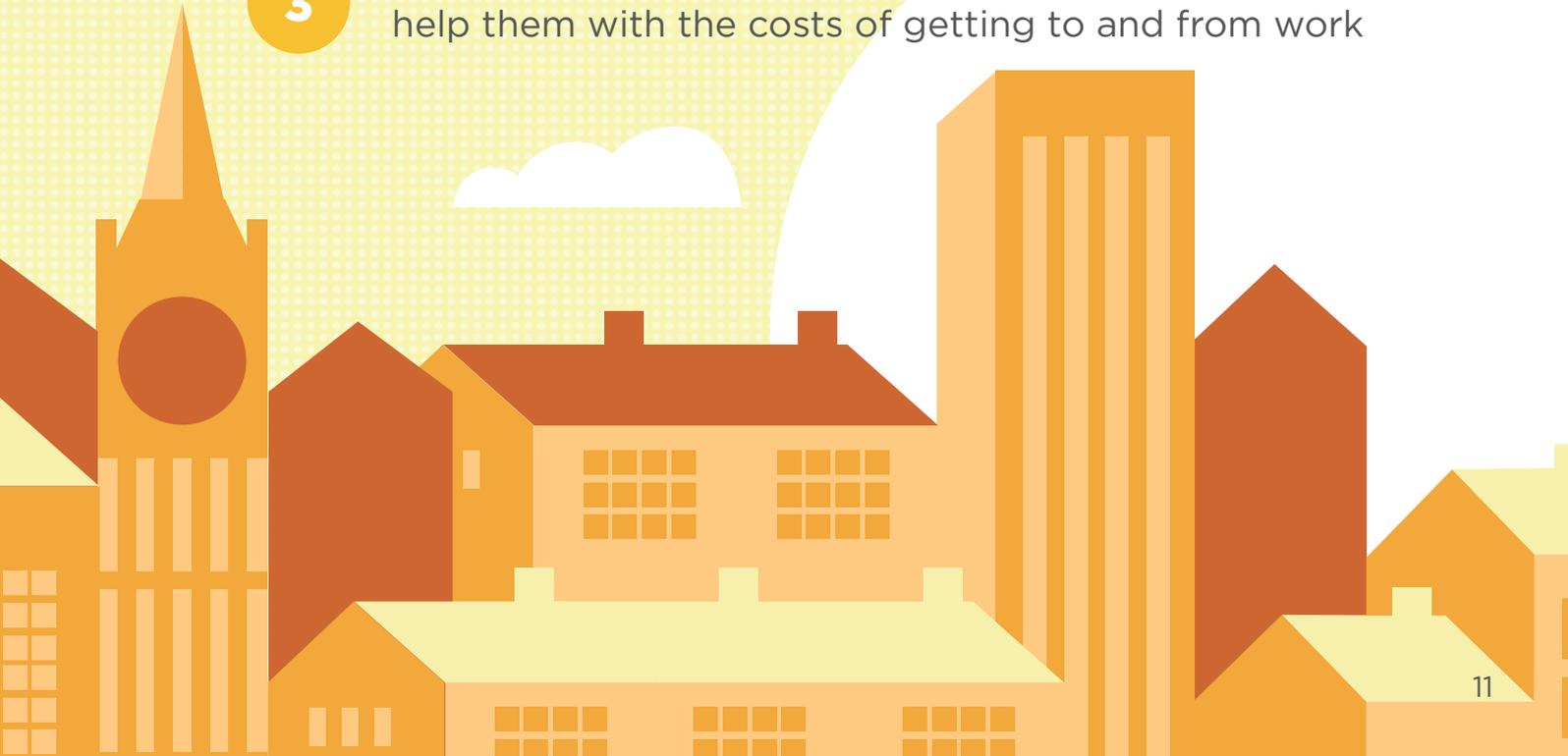
“Certainly discounted travel – parking facilities are extremely expensive for colleagues that drive to the hospital site.”



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on feedback from members in this survey and working with partnership organisations in the region, the RCN has identified a three point plan for local politicians and policy makers to help health staff with the cost of living:

- 1** Reintroduce and strengthen London's key worker housing regulations
- 2** Require new homes built on NHS land to be offered first to low paid NHS staff
- 3** And offer discounted travel for London health staff to help them with the costs of getting to and from work



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