

Further to the press release below sent yesterday, we want to point out that HSJ has not calculated the exact proportion or fraction of nursing recruits to the NHS who came from overseas. Our analysis demonstrates only that these represent a substantial number of nurses. We do not have information suggesting the exact or rough proportion. The assertion in the press release that “overseas recruits could have made up more than four-fifths of the total in that period” was therefore misleading. HSJ’s published piece, copied below, states: “The numbers illustrate the scale of the shortage of UK based nurses and mean that overseas recruits constituted a substantial proportion of the total hired by hospitals.”

Exclusive: Staff shortage fuels recruitment of nearly 6,000 overseas nurses

A shortage of registered nurses to fill an increasing number of posts has driven nearly three-quarters of hospital trusts to recruit overseas, an HSJ investigation has revealed.

Analysis of data from all 140 English acute hospital trusts shows that 103 recruited a total of 5,778 nurses from overseas in the 12 months to September 2014.

The numbers illustrate the scale of the shortage of UK based nurses and mean that overseas recruits constituted a substantial proportion of the total hired by hospitals.

HSJ’s figures indicate overseas recruitment increased dramatically compared with the same period in 2012-13. In that year, of 105 trusts that provided information, only 40 reported recruiting a total of 1,360 nurses from outside the UK.

More than three-quarters of acute trusts - 107 - increased their funded establishment of full time nursing posts between September 2013 and September 2014, of which 11 increased it by more than 10 per cent, information provided to *HSJ* has shown.

It represents further evidence that hospitals have increased nursing numbers following the February 2013 Francis report into care failings at Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust, and guidance on safe staffing levels published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence earlier this year.

This trend is likely to be adding to the pressure to recruit from abroad, sources told *HSJ*.

The countries from which most nurses were recruited in the year to September were Spain, Portugal and the Philippines, which together provided more than 3,700 staff. Fourteen trusts each recruited more than 100 nurses from overseas. King’s College Hospital Foundation Trust recruited the most, 276.

HSJ also asked acute trusts if they intended to continue to recruit from overseas in the year to September 2015, and 93 said they did. Most have yet to determine the numbers they will seek to hire, but 32 that did provide information predicted they would want to find 1,800 nurses in total.

Candace Imison, director of healthcare systems at the Nuffield Trust, said: “This data is very concerning.

“For hospitals relying on nurses from abroad - while they can be excellent nurses - it really is not an ideal way to recruit your staff, and is a symptom of a broader problem in that we aren’t in balance in

this country in terms of the numbers of UK nurses who are willing to work in our hospitals versus the places we have for them.”

Southampton University principle research fellow Jane Ball, a leading nursing workforce expert, said: “This shows we are in a serious shortage of nurses and it is a shortage that has been waiting to be realised. It is not new or sudden.

“The Francis inquiry was a catalyst to uncover what had been until then a more hidden problem. This is about uncovering what has been a growing, deepening problem that the NHS decided not to focus on because of financial pressures and other challenges.”

Professor Ball said overseas recruitment is a “band aid” for staff shortages. It is “such a short term stop gap and so inefficient”, she added.

However, the increase in full time nursing posts was welcomed by Unison’s head of health Christina McAnea, who said the shortage was as a result of a “lack of focus on workforce planning over a number of years”. But she added that “while it is good news” to be increasing nursing posts, it should not be at the expense of limiting staff pay.

A spokeswoman for the Department of Health said: “Individual trusts are responsible for planning and recruiting their workforce, but it is important to note that overseas nurses have always made a valuable contribution to the NHS.”

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