

SUMMARY OF VACANCY, SHORTFALL AND FILL RATE DATA FOR THE CLINICAL WORKFORCE

Given that there is only limited data available on staff vacancies in the NHS, the below definitions aim to help make sense of the different measures of the balance between the supply of and demand for staff.

A vacancy rate is the percentage of reported full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in post against planned workforce levels. A vacancy is defined as a post that is unfilled by permanent or fixed-term staff. Agency or temporary staff may fill some vacant posts. Total vacancy rates are a calculation of the total number of FTE vacancies and the total funded or budgeted establishment (comprised of the number of staff in post and the number of vacant posts). NHS Improvement's [Workforce Planning Technical Guidance 2017/18](#) provides more information.

While the current data collection does not define or explicitly seek vacancy data, Health Education England (HEE) does not use the term 'vacancy' and instead uses 'shortfall' to give a sense of unmet demand. The shortfall rate is calculated as the proportion of the number of staff in post compared to the staff establishment, with a percentage figure representing the shortfall. This data does not tell the whole story as many employers will not be actively recruiting to fill the entire gap between demand and supply due to financial constraints or decisions to use temporary staffing to make up the shortfall.

The fill rate is the proportion of training places that are advertised or offered, and then taken up by trainees or students.

Nurses, health visitors and midwives

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
The number of nursing and midwifery vacancies across all NHS settings increased by 22% from March 2015 to March 2017 (at the same time as the total number of FTE posts increased by 1% for nurses and 3% for midwives).	These numbers are based on NHS Digital data, which should be used with caution due to issues with the quality of the data. It is not currently possible to calculate accurate vacancy rates based on NHS Digital staff in post data. One of the problems is that the data is taken from NHS Jobs, the main recruitment website for the NHS, which uses one advert to show multiple vacancies or ongoing recruitment, so it tends to undercount the real number of vacancies. This particularly affects nursing vacancy numbers as rolling adverts are often used.	NHS Digital data as reported in the Care Quality Commission, State of Health Care and Adult Social Care in England 2016/17.
The provider expressed shortfall from demand for nurses and midwives in England was 9% as at March 2015. There is considerable regional variation e.g. London and the South East has a shortfall rate of 12.4% while the North has a shortfall rate of 6.7%	HEE uses 'shortfall' as a proxy for 'vacancy rates' as the data collection does not define nor explicitly seek vacancy data. The shortfalls for England and its regions are calculated as a percentage of total demand in 2015.	Health Education England's written evidence for NHS Pay Review Body 2017/18

Nurses (excluding health visitors and midwives)

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
There are 40,000 vacant nursing posts in the NHS in England, as of December 2016 – double the amount in 2013. This equates to a vacancy rate of 11.9%. Nearly a quarter of trusts reported a registered nurse vacancy rate of over 15%, with the highest vacancy rate at 37%. There are approximately 28,000 vacancies of Band 5 nurses, with an average vacancy rate of 16%.	Data is based on Freedom of Information responses from three-quarters of the provider sector and is scaled up to give approximate vacancy rates.	The Royal College of Nursing, <i>Safe and Effective Staffing: the Real Picture</i>
As of March 2015, the provider expressed shortfall from demand for nurses and midwives was 9% in England, 6.7% in the North, 8.3% in the Midlands and East, 12.4% in London and the South East, and 9.9% in the South. The data implies the shortfall of nurses and midwifery staff equates to 30,500.	HEE collected this data from providers as part of their demand forecasting work.	Pay Review Body Thirtieth Report (2017)
There were 26,700 nursing vacancies in England as of April 2015. Gaps between supply and demand range from 5.4% in the North East to 13.8% in South London.	Averages mask a wider range between individual organisations, and between nursing branches and specialisms.	Health Education England, Workforce Plan for England: Proposed Education and Training Commissions for 2016/17
As at November 2015, the overall nursing vacancy rate across trusts is 10% and regional vacancy rates vary between 7% and 18%. Of the trusts that responded, 31% were estimated to have 1-60 FTE registered nurse vacancies, 27% were estimated to have between 61-120 FTE vacancies, and 24% were estimated to have between 121-300 FTE vacancies	Only includes trusts that provided their staffing establishment data to this survey. 147 trusts responded to this survey, which represents a response rate of 61%.	NHS Employers – NHS registered nurse supply and demand survey findings (December 2015)
Potential nursing shortfall numbers after the UK leaves the EU: Worst-case scenario: fall by 42,000 by 2026 Best- case scenario: fall by 26,000 by 2026	Leaked modelling from the Department of Health reveals a risk of undersupply if immigration rules change and cease inflows of healthcare workers from overseas.	Health Service Journal (April 2017)

Mental health nurses

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
In 2016, there were 67,800 nursing and midwifery posts in mental health trusts, and 7,600 vacancies. This equates to a vacancy rate of 11%. Overall, there are 20,000 vacancies in mental health services, equating to a total vacancy rate of 10%.	HEE notes the difficulty in drawing broad conclusions about the staff delivering mental health services as this happens over a variety of settings by a wide variety of staff.	Health Education England, <i>Stepping forward to 2020/21: The mental health workforce plan for England</i> (July 2017).
The vacancy rate in mental health nursing posts was 14.2% as of 1 December 2016. Seven out of the top 10 highest reported vacancy rates for registered nurses were in mental health trusts.	Data is based on Freedom of Information responses from three-quarters of the provider sector and is scaled up to give approximate vacancy rates. The vacancy rate for nurses was greatest in mental health services.	The Royal College of Nursing, <i>Safe and Effective Staffing: the Real Picture</i>
The shortfall of mental health nurses in 2015 was 3,789 (9.1%). HEE forecasts a surplus of 4,491 (10.7%) if high supply and 1,712 (4.1%) if low supply in 2020.	Data is taken from Office of Manpower Economics analysis of Health Education England data (2016).	NHS Pay Review Body Thirtieth Report 2017

Learning disability nurses

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
Forecast shortfall of 393 learning disability nurses (9.1%) in 2015 but a surplus in 2020 of 1,390 if high supply and 738 if low supply.	Data is taken from Office of Manpower Economics analysis of Health Education England data (2016).	NHS Pay Review Body Thirtieth Report 2017
There has been a drop of 14.3% in the number of learning disability nurses between 2011 and 2015.	This is based on NHS Digital data.	RCN Labour market review 2016

Community nurses

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
Vacancy rate is 9.4% for community nurses in England, as of 1 December 2016.	Data is based on Freedom of Information responses from three-quarters of the provider sector and is scaled up to give approximate vacancy rates.	The Royal College of Nursing, <i>Safe and Effective Staffing: the Real Picture</i>

General Practitioners (GPs)

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
A survey of 860 GPs found 12.2% of positions are currently vacant (2017). This is an increase from 2.1% in 2011 when Pulse started collecting this data.	NHS England say the data is not robust as the sample size was too small.	Pulse magazine survey (May 2017)
Nearly a third of GP practices in England had at least one vacancy for a GP partner, with similar vacancies for salaried GPs and practice nurses (2016).	The data was based on responses to an online survey, so it is only a sample.	BMA survey of GPs in England, December 2016
Figures show a net reduction of 1,252 (full-time equivalent) at the end of March 2017, compared with 2016.	There is no accurate data available on current shortages (or a proxy for vacancy rates) for GPs.	NHS Digital (2017)
In 2015 more than 600 GP trainee posts were vacant across England.	This data was taken from HEE's GP National Recruitment Office.	BMA report on Workload, recruitment, retention and morale (May 2016)
The average fill rate (between 2015 and 2016) for General Practice was 83% in England, but only 70% in the North.	"Fill rate" is the proportion of advertised training posts that are filled.	Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body 2017/18

Paramedics

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
Ambulance trusts had a paramedic vacancy rate of 10% in 2015.	In April 2015, the Migration Advisory Committee added paramedics to the shortage occupation list based on this data.	National Audit Office report into NHS Ambulance Services 2017
The shortfall of paramedics in 2015 was 721 (5.5%). The forecast shortfall of paramedics in 2020 was 1,815 (11.7%) if high supply and 3,675 (23.7%) if low supply.	Data taken from OME analysis of Health Education England data (2016)	NHS Pay Review Body Thirtieth Report 2017

Psychiatrists

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
As of July 2017, 13% of mental health consultant posts are vacant (700 of 5,400). This is expected to rise to 18%.	In recent years, the numbers of psychiatrists employed in the NHS has grown more slowly than the wider medical workforce.	Health Education England, Stepping forward to 2020/21: The mental health workforce plan for England
The number of vacant or unfilled consultant posts rose by 50.6% from 2013 to 2015 (up from 232 in 2013 to 349 in 2015).	This increase in vacant consultant posts is concerning and indicates the persistent recruitment challenges reported by mental health services.	Royal College of Psychiatrists, census 2015
As of March 2015, the provider expressed shortfall from demand for psychiatrists in England is 8%, and is most acute in the North with a shortfall of 13%.	HEE uses 'shortfall' as a proxy for 'vacancy rates' and shows the difference as a 'shortfall from demand'. HEE does not use the term 'vacancy' as the data collection does not define nor explicitly seek vacancy data.	Health Education England's written evidence to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body 2017/18
In 2017, by HEE region, the South West filled almost 100% of Higher Speciality Training posts in General Psychiatry, and in London and the South East 78% of higher training posts were filled, but in other parts of the country such as the North the 'fill rate' is as low as 38%.	Data shows the geographical variation in fill rates for higher level training. This can lead to a lack of competition for placements and a reliance on non-UK recruitment into these posts.	Health Education England, Stepping forward to 2020/21: The mental health workforce plan for England
The fill rate (2 year average between 2015 and 2016) for Core Psychiatry Training was 79% in England, but only 66% in the North. The fill rate for 'higher' level psychiatry posts (6 specialities) was 58% in England.	"Fill rate" is the proportion of advertised training posts that are filled. Data shows London was able to fill almost all of its posts across specialities, while the North and East and Midlands had more difficulty.	Health Education England's written evidence to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body 2017/18

A&E consultants

Data	Analysis and data quality	Source
In 2016 there were 243 vacancies for emergency medicine consultants across England, Wales and Northern Ireland (11% of the total).	The figures include 106 out of 166 trusts and health boards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland between November and January 2016.	The BBC report, according to the Office for National Statistics
Estimated shortfall of 3,000 emergency	"Had the workforce as a whole grown at a similar rate [to patient admissions] there would now be 8,074 doctors	Royal College of Emergency Medicine evidence to

<p>medicine consultants in 2016.</p>	<p>working in our emergency departments rather than, as now, 5300"</p>	<p>Health Select Committee Autumn 2016</p>
<p>The current provider expressed shortfall from demand for A&E consultants in England was 13% in March 2015. The region with the highest shortfall is the East and Midlands with 15%.</p>	<p>HEE uses 'shortfall' as a proxy for 'vacancy rates' and shows the difference as a 'shortfall from demand'. HEE does not use the term 'vacancy' as the data collection does not define nor explicitly seek vacancy data.</p>	<p>Health Education England's written evidence for 2017/18</p>