

Nursing and Midwifery Update Review 2008



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

MÁNNYSTRIE O

**Poustie, Resydënter Heisin
an Fowk Siccar**

Nursing and Midwifery Update Review 2008

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Introduction

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) carried out a comprehensive review of the nursing, midwifery and health visiting workforce in 2005,

[Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Report
September 2005 \(PDF 291 KB\)](#)

The review provided a detailed profile of this workforce, identified specific recruitment and retention issues for this profession and made projections of the supply and demand for the five year period 2005-2009. The report also made a number of recommendations for action to address issues arising from the review. The report indicated movement towards balance in supply and demand. Progress continued to be made to improve the supply situation, as a result of increases in commissioned training places and overseas employees in the workforce.

The update review carried out in 2007 considered the current position of the workforce, examined whether the trends predicted in the 2005 review were emerging as expected and considered if there were any major new developments impacting on the workforce.

A Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting workforce advisory group, comprising of members of the professions, Trust Human Resources and staff-side were convened to assist in the update review.

A further full review of the profession will be undertaken in 2008.

Nurses work in a variety of settings, for example, hospitals, clinics, nursing and residential homes, occupational health services,

Nurses also work in prison healthcare, education and the armed forces.

Introduction

Nursing

To work in the Health and Social Care sector, nurses must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). It is possible to undertake either a diploma or degree course to qualify as a nurse.

Education is provided by universities, with placements in local hospital, private sector and community settings. The first year is a Common Foundation Programme (CFP), and students then specialise in either adult, children's, mental health or learning disability nursing. Full time diploma courses run for three years. Degree courses run for three or four years.

Branches of Nursing

Adult nursing

Adult nurses are trained to care for old and young adults with diverse health conditions, both chronic and acute. They juggle numerous priorities and use caring, counselling, managing, teaching and all aspects of interpersonal skills to improve the quality of patients' lives, sometimes in difficult situations. They provide physical, psychological and emotional support. Work may be based in hospital wards, clinics or, increasingly, community settings.

Children's nursing

Children's nurses care for children and young people to age 18. They also work closely and in partnership with parents and families. They deal with a range of situations, including planned routine interventions, emergency care and complex care. Children's nursing takes place in hospitals, clinics and in the child's home. Once qualified, it is possible to specialise in hospital and community settings in areas such as burns and plastics, intensive care, community children's nursing, (which deals with children with complex physical healthcare and acute needs to facilitate early discharge), child protection and cancer care.

Nurses focus on the needs of the individual, rather than specific illnesses or conditions, helping individuals and their families to live more comfortable lives by providing care, advice and counselling.

Introduction

Learning disability nursing

Learning disability nurses work as part of a team alongside GPs, psychologists, therapists, teachers and social workers. Nurses who qualify in this branch of nursing help those with learning disabilities to live independent and fulfilling lives. This may involve working with people in supported accommodation - typically three to four people with learning disabilities live together in flats or houses, with 24 hour support. Some nurses work with individuals who require more intensive support - for instance, in hospitals or in specialist secure units for offenders with learning disabilities. Others specialise in areas such as epilepsy management or working with people with sensory impairment.

Nursing is carried out in settings such as adult education, residential and community centres, as well as in patients' homes, workplaces and schools. Some nurses choose to specialise in education, sensory disability or the management of services.

Mental health nursing

Mental health nurses work with GPs, psychiatrists, social workers and others to co-ordinate the care of people suffering from mental illness. The vast majority of people with mental health problems live in the community. Nurses plan and deliver care for people living in their own home, in small residential units or specialist hospital services. Some are based in health centres. It is possible to develop expertise in areas such as rehabilitation, child and adolescent mental health, substance misuse and working with offenders.

*About 2-3%
of the
population
has a
learning
disability.*

Introduction

Midwifery

Midwifery education is at degree level.

Midwives practise in a variety of settings such as hospitals, neonatal units and with GPs in community settings. There are opportunities to specialise in public health, women's health and to run specialist services, such as teenage pregnancy clinics.

Specialist Community Public Health Nurses

This group includes health visitors, school nurses and occupational health nurses. Health visitors are registered nurses or midwives who have undertaken additional training regarding the promotion of good health. They are members of the primary healthcare team, covering a specific geographical or GP practice area. They work in partnership with a network of organisations concerned with health promotion. Their work can be delivered in people's homes, schools, and health centres. Much of their work can involve targeting vulnerable groups and individuals, such as ethnic minorities and travellers.

The Advisory Group reported that it can be difficult to attract individuals into Health visiting, and that attrition rates are not easy to define.

Healthcare Assistants

Healthcare Assistants (sometimes known as nursing auxiliaries or support workers) may hold an NVQ qualification but are not qualified nurses. They work with nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals, under the delegated authority of the registered nurse or midwife to deliver specific aspects of care.

Midwives are often the key health professional supporting, guiding and caring for the mother, baby and family through the months of pregnancy, during the birth itself and afterwards in the postnatal period.

Key Issues Explored

Headcount

The statistics show that the nursing and midwifery workforce has been increasing year on year. There are 685 additional staff employed in this workforce since 2005, equating to 604.74 WTE. Since March 2003 there has been an 8.9% increase in headcount/9.4 % increase in whole time equivalent.

The HSC nursing workforce represents a total headcount of 20,997 in Northern Ireland (31st March 2007).

Full and part-time working

The percentages have remained unchanged since 2003 with 56% of the workforce working full-time and 44% working part-time.

Gender Profile

At 2007, a further 32 males had joined the workforce compared to 653 females. The workforce is currently 92% female against 8% male. This shows little change since the 2005 review.

Vacancy Rates

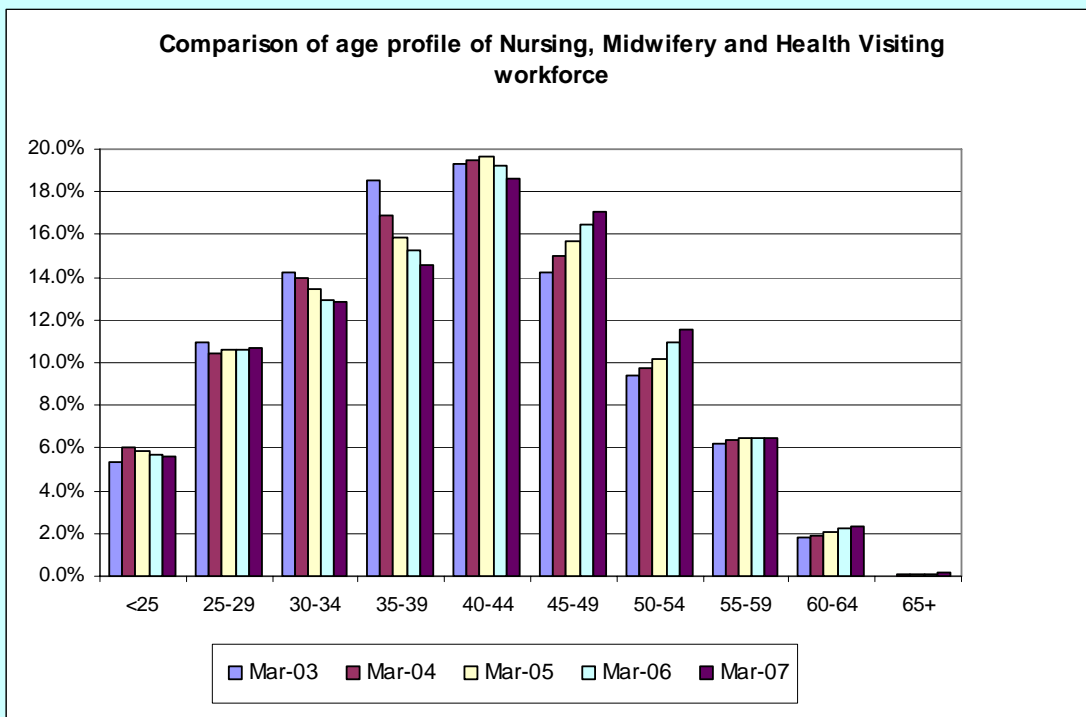
The level of vacancy has remained relatively stable over the past number of years. As at 31st March 2006, (the latest date for which information is available), there were 581 short-term and 168 long-term vacancies in Nursing and Midwifery in NI HSC.

Within the total Qualified Nursing Staff there are currently over 12,630 Qualified Nurses, over 550 Health Visitors, over 1,100 District Nurses and over 1,200 Midwives.

Key Issues Explored

Age Profile

The 2005 full review noted that the age profile of the nursing and midwifery workforce was increasing with 67% aged between 30-49.



In 2007 This shows little change with 66% of the workforce being between 30-49.

Mental Health and Learning Disability nursing was cited as an area of particular concern regarding the age profile. The midwifery age profile also gave cause for concern. (Further detailed information is provided within this review).

Progress on actions since last review

➤ *Training Commissions*

DHSSPS has maintained commission levels; following a budget cut in 2005, the number of places was reduced by 20 and now stands at 730 pre-registration nursing places per annum.

➤ *Improvements to HRMS*

The Department and Trusts have been working together to improve specialty coding and have made good progress. For example, mental health and learning disability nurses can now be identified accurately from HRMS. As the Trusts continue to implement Agenda for Change coding changes the situation will further improve.

➤ *Attrition*

An attrition data set to monitor attrition rate for nursing students has been agreed between the Universities and the Department; starting September 2007.

The Department has calculated attrition rate as, on average 16%, averaged over the preceding 5 academic years

This area will be further explored within the full review.

➤ ***The Open University diploma programme***

The Open University Diploma programme is a part-time, work-based course, which is available to HSC employees, for example, healthcare assistants. With effect from September 2007, the programme has been extended to QUB and UU who each have 15 places out of their total commission.

➤ ***Quality of placements***

Work has just started on revising the Partnership Agreement between service, education and the Department to ensure maintenance of agreed standards and practices in relation to placements. Also the new NMC standards for Learning and Assessment in Practice aim to improve the experience of clinical placements.

In addition, following a review of Clinical Supervision within Nursing in Northern Ireland, Supervision Standards for Nursing have been written to include a new definition of supervision. These have been distributed to Trusts through the Executive Directors of Nursing.

A Regional Forum has been established to take forward a range of recommendations around implementation and governance of supervision for nursing to include education, training and assessment of outcomes.

➤ ***Supply/Demand issues in the independent sector***

The Department will endeavour to take account of this in the next full review however there is an issue regarding the availability of information.

Midwifery

The profession continues to be predominantly female with only two males currently employed in the workforce.

As at March 2007 there were **1293** midwives, (1015.68 WTE). The Department currently commissions 24 direct-entry midwifery places per annum and a further 20 places on the 18-month midwifery programme. There are currently 63 students on the direct entry midwifery programme and 39 on the 18-month midwifery programme. This gives a total of 102 students currently in training.

The age profile of the midwifery profession is rising/increasing.

There is a decline in the number of neonatal nurses within the profession at present.

Midwives in employment pre-1995 can retire from 55.

Scenario 1 illustrates the **maximum** numbers who could possibly retire over the next 5 years.

Age profile in midwifery is increasing

Table 1

	All Trusts
Those already at 55 years and over	142
those reaching 55 in: 2008	45
-2009	46
-2010	36
-2011	43
-2012	57

This equates to 29% of the current workforce.

This however illustrates the worst case scenario and it is unlikely that all midwives will retire at 55, given historical trends on retirement age.

Midwifery

Retirement Data for the previous 5-year period 2003-2007

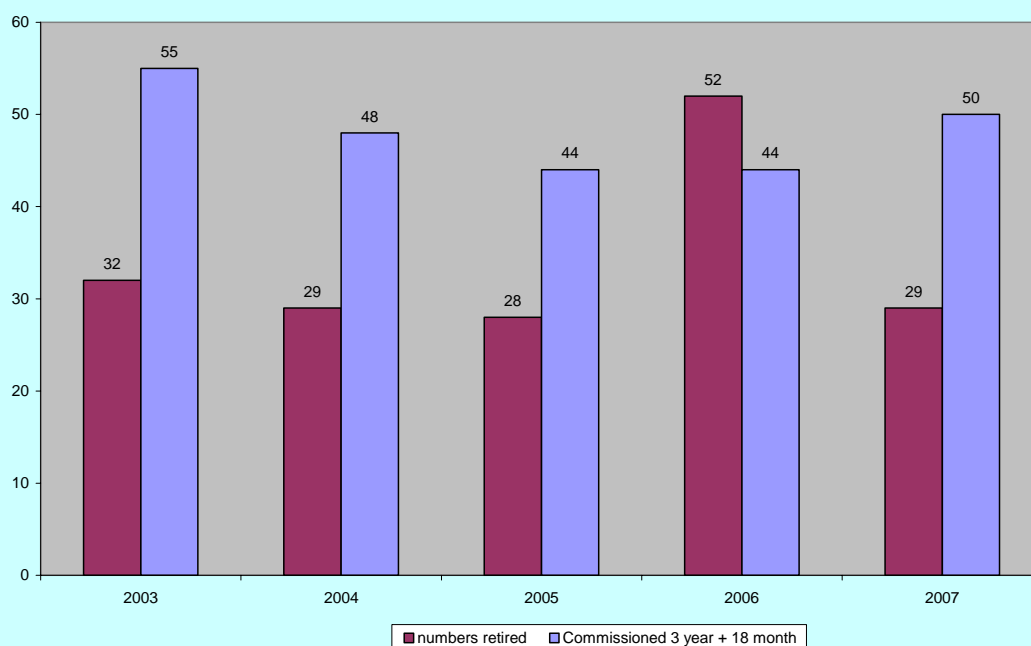
The actual number of midwives retired from 2003-2007 is

Table 2

	Actual retirements	as a % of total midwives
2003	32	2.5%
2004	29	2.3%
2005	28	2.2%
2006	52	4.1%
2007 up to Oct	29	2.3%

The chart below shows the actual number of midwives retired for each of the last 5 years against students commissioned

Actual numbers of midwives retired against students commissioned



Midwifery

- ❖ *This graph indicates that commissioned numbers of midwives has, from 2003 -2005 outstripped numbers retiring by 15+ each year.*
- ❖ *In 2006 there was a large increase in the number of midwives retiring (86%) on the previous year and for 2006 the number of retirees outstripped numbers commissioned by 8. This reflects general demographic trends of an ageing workforce.*
- ❖ *In 2007 it should be noted that the figures presented for numbers retired do not represent a full calendar year. (Jan-October only)*

Scenario 2 Average retirement age remains at 57 over the next five years

Table 3 sets out estimations of those retiring for the next 5 years

Table 3

	All Trusts	
	Headcount	% total Midwives
those already aged 57+	90	7.0
those reaching 57 in - 2008	28	2.2
2009	24	1.9
2010	45	3.4
2011	46	3.7
2012	36	2.8

Midwifery

Total Potential retirements over the next 5 years = 269

To help counteract the impact of retirements the Department increased midwifery training places in 2007 by 6 this year from 44 to 50.

If training commissions remain at 44 (50 for 2007) this gives a

Maximum potential shortfall of 43 midwives over the next 5 years






However it is not certain that all midwives who are eligible for retirement over the next 5 years will choose to do so.

It should be noted that on completion of courses of study, new midwives often request part-time work. The current headcount to whole-time equivalent ratio for midwives is 1.27:1. This remains unchanged from the previous review. If this ratio remains constant, over the next 5 years, for every 44 midwives trained the actual WTE entering the workforce may be 35.

The age profile of the pre-registration midwifery course is also mature and the advisory group felt that this would also impact on the profession as potential entrants to the workforce were more likely to seek part-time working arrangements.

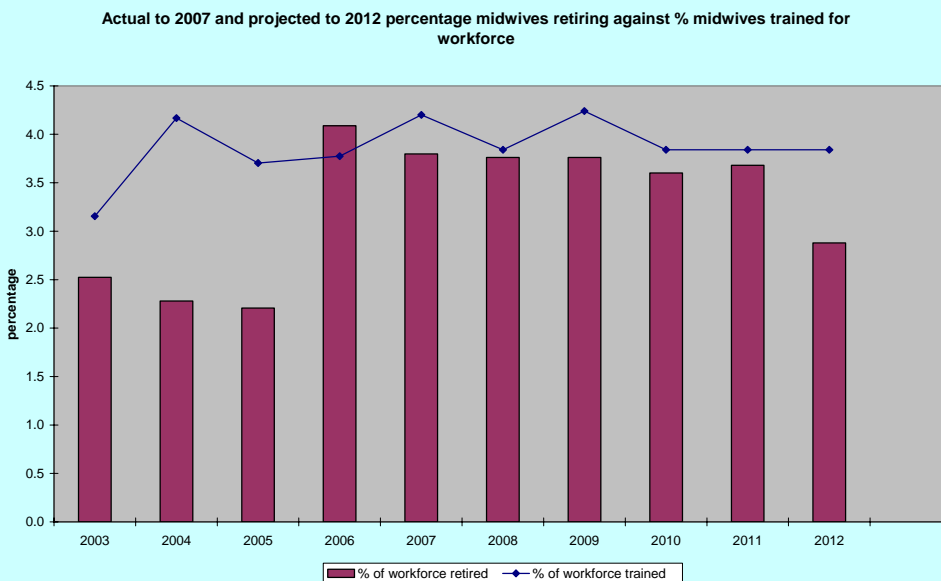
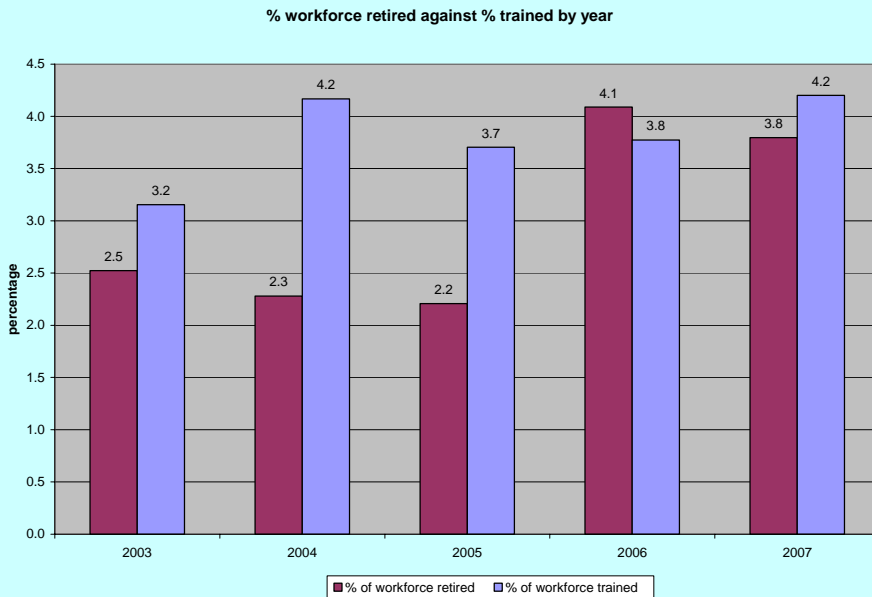
When examining the figures broken down by Trust, the Southern Trust appears to have the greatest cause for concern in the immediate future.

Potential retirements at age 57, up to and including 2009 by Health and Social Care Trust

-  Belfast - 21
-  Northern - 35
-  Western - 31
-  South Eastern - 15
-  Southern - 40

Midwifery

The chart below represents the % of the workforce actually retired for each of the last 5 years plotted against the % of the workforce trained each year.



Births have risen from 21962 in 2001 to 23272 in 2006 (Source: NISRA)

Midwifery

Return to Practice Initiatives

Return to Practice Programmes in midwifery are offered by the Nursing and Midwifery Education Unit of the Beeches Management Centre. Numbers of applicants vary but on average there are 6 – 8 participants per course of which there are 2 intakes per year. The theoretical component is funded by DHSSPS and students must also undertake a period of supervised practice in Trust Maternity Units. None of the course is salaried.

In England a need has been identified to recruit an additional 4000 midwives to the NHS over the next 3 years. A package of measures has been put in place to help achieve this including a new Return to Practice initiative. The Department of Health in England and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) will launch a Return to Practice campaign in the summer, with incentives including free training, support with childcare and travel costs plus a grant of up to £1,500. The total value of the package will be around £3,000.

Recruitment Difficulties

Recruitment difficulties into midwifery were cited by the advisory group. The Group stated that efforts have been made to recruit from the Republic of Ireland; however there is no surplus within their workforce.

Skill Mix

The Department provides funding for support workers to undertake the NVQ level 3 in maternity care, to provide meaningful support to midwives and allow them to concentrate on their clinical role

Department Initiatives

The Department is currently funding a cohort of 12 registered nurses to retrain as midwives, in order to address the specific difficulties faced by the Southern Trust. In addition, consideration is being given to keeping numbers of training commissions at 50 at least for the next year. If agreed, this would increase the total midwifery commission for 08/09 to 62 places.

➤ Recommendation

Consideration should be given to the possibility of a new return to practice initiative. The feasibility of this should be fully explored in the full review of the nursing workforce.

The Department is funding an NVQ Level 3 in maternity care

Mental Health Nursing

The total number of Mental Health nurses (including community psychiatric nurses) as at 31st March 2007 was 1,562 (1,472.02 WTE).

As with midwifery the age profile of the workforce is increasing. This creates difficulties in providing support to staff requesting reduced working hours.

The number of predicted retirements over the next five years is;

All Trusts	Total
Those already aged 55 years and over	115
Those turning 55 yrs in:	35
- 2008	
- 2009	38
- 2010	64
- 2011	51
- 2012	48

This gives a figure of 351 total potential retirements over the next 5 years, (322 WTE).

This equates to 22% of the current workforce.

There are 90 commissioned training places for mental health nursing per annum between QUB and UU, providing the potential for up to 450 mental health nurses entering the workforce over the next 5 years. Further places are also commissioned on the part-time Open University programme. For academic year 08/09, the Department is commissioning 117 pre-registration mental health places. However it will be necessary to explore whether the actual numbers likely to enter the workforce will meet predicted retirements over this period.

In addition QUB and UU offer a programme for advanced standing in mental health nursing, providing the potential for registered nurses to undertake training in the Mental Health branch of nursing.

The age profile of the workforce is increasing

Mental Health Nursing

Recruitment Difficulties

Difficulties in recruitment remain in mental health nursing. The advisory group stated that the workforce is generally uninspired with their role and future career prospects. While this is the perception, in reality there is scope for significant career development within this specialism. A culture change is therefore required in order to promote a positive message to encourage young people into the profession.

The impact of the recommendations contained within the Bamford review should provide clear career opportunities and improve recruitment and retention of staff.

Geographical recruitment issues exist within certain areas of NI, with some regions finding it particularly difficult to attract staff.

Recruitment Initiative

An advertising campaign was launched in November 2007 to attract students into both Mental Health and Learning Disability nursing. The campaign has the co-operation of all three universities in Northern Ireland – University of Ulster, the Open University and Queen's University. It also has the support of the Royal College of Nursing. The information leaflets from the campaign have been made available to all career officers and job centres in NI.

Results to date have been positive; both Universities have reported an increase in applications for academic year 2008-2009.

The **University of Ulster's** applications have increased by 38. In response to this the Department has altered the balance of the commission by increasing the number of pre-reg Mental Health places by 9, to 49 (for 08/09 only, however the situation will be kept under review).

Queen's University Belfast has also reported a significant increase with 88 applications this year against 62 for 2007-2008. Queen's currently have 50 commissioned places.

The total number of Mental Health nurses as at 31st March 2007 was 1,562 (1,472.02 WTE).

Mental Health Nursing

Gender Balance

Gender balance is again an issue in the mental health nursing workforce as female staff find it difficult to work in high intensity sites without male colleague support. It is important to try to attract more males into the profession however the advisory group felt that career pathways were an issue when trying to attract men into the area of mental health nursing.

Agenda for change

The advisory group suggested that the impact of the implementation of Agenda for Change terms and conditions needs further exploration in the next full review of the profession as it may be affecting recruitment and retention.

Development of Healthcare Assistants

Healthcare assistants' education and training is primarily linked to the NVQ route and many have availed of the opportunity for further development. Over recent years, the development of the Open University pre-registration nursing programmes has seen a number of healthcare assistants progress to nursing careers.

In addition, as part of the Workforce outcomes arising from the Bamford Mental Health review, additional funding has been identified to increase the number of pre-registration places available to train Mental Health Nurses. Support has also been available from the workforce Unions to support training for access courses to nursing.

The total number of Mental Health nurses as at March 2007 was 1,562 (1,472.02 WTE).

Mental Health Nursing

Workforce Planning Review

The Department is commissioning a workforce planning exercise in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of workforce needs to support implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford report. It is recognised that a key priority underpinning the provision of modernised services is the development of an appropriate workforce in the necessary numbers and with the required range of skills to ensure it is fit for purpose.

➤ *Recommendation*

Sustained effort will be required to promote this branch of nursing and to attract potential students into the profession. It is suggested that males and school-leavers should be specifically targeted.

Applications to mental health nursing have increased

Learning Disability Nursing

The total number of Learning Disability nurses as at March 2007 was 437 (399.0 WTE).

The advisory Group highlighted that, although Learning Disability nursing faced many of the same issues as Mental Health Nursing it was important to recognise the recruitment issues specific to this Group also.

The advisory group also reported that should numbers in the workforce reduce any further from current levels there could be a detrimental impact on service delivery.

The total number of Learning Disability nurses as at March 2007 was 437 (399 WTE)

All Trusts	Total
Those already aged 55 years and over	51
Those turning 55 yrs in:	8
- 2008	8
- 2009	13
- 2010	9
- 2011	14
- 2012	17

This totals a projected 112 learning disability nurses retiring over the next 5 years. (101.84 WTE), equating to 26% of the current workforce.

As with the mental health nursing workforce it will be necessary to investigate during the full review whether the number entering the workforce over the next 5 years will meet the expected retirements.

There are currently 30 pre-reg training commissions at Queens University Belfast for learning disability nursing.

Queen's University offer a programme for advanced standing in Learning Disability nursing, providing the potential for registered nurses to undertake training in this branch of nursing.

Learning Disability Nursing

Recruitment Difficulties

Recruitment difficulties also exist within this area. Factors such as cultural awareness, career pathways and geographical issues impact on the recruitment to this area of the profession.

Learning Disability Course

The timing of the intake for the Learning Disability course is currently being considered by the Agreement Management Group. The pre-registration programme starts in February/March. Queens University are considering a September enrolment.

Clinical Supervision

Employers need to recognise the importance of adequate and appropriate clinical supervision to ensure clinical placements are effective.

Gender Balance

Again, as with mental health nursing remuneration is an issue in attracting men to the workforce. It was agreed that schools must be targeted and this area publicised as an exciting profession of the future. The current advertising campaign should go part of the way in addressing this.

Skill-Mix

The development of skill mix needs further exploration

Again, the advisory group felt that it was important to ensure that care assistants/auxiliaries currently working within the workforce were given the opportunity for part time study to progress into the profession.

➤ ***Recommendation***

As with mental health nursing it will be important to continue to pro-actively encourage potential staff into the profession. The success of the current campaign should be explored during the full review.

Children's Nursing

Main issues identified by the advisory group

- ✚ There are currently 40 commissioned places in this area however there are concerns this number is insufficient in sustaining the level of growth in children's services, particularly within the community setting. The Department is considering conducting a workforce review to examine the area of children's nursing.
- ✚ Recruitment and retention difficulties are expected due to perceived lack of career development.
- ✚ The entry requirements for pre-registration at Queens University are also an issue as qualified nursery nurses are currently ineligible to apply for a place on the course. It was recommended that the local universities should give consideration to this decision.
- ✚ The new build Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick children plans to increase the age limit for admission increasing to 16. The increased age limit means that an increase in the number of children's nurses will be necessary. There will be a need to examine current intake numbers during the full review.
- ✚ The demand for overseas recruitment is beginning to diminish. However it was noted this is not the case in the independent sector.

➤ **Recommendation**

The growth in Children's services should be further investigated in the full nursing workforce review.

Summary of Recommendations

General

The current commissioned numbers should be maintained although it is recognised that there may be a dip in demand for new nurses over the Comprehensive Spending Review period.

Midwifery

Although the number of midwifery training places has been increased this academic year, and a plan has been implemented in the Southern Trust to rectify its projected shortfall, it is essential that midwifery numbers are kept under review given concerns surrounding the age profile. For this reason it is anticipated that midwifery training places will remain at 50 for at least academic year 08/09 also.

Consideration should be given to the possibility of a new return to practice initiative. The feasibility of this should be fully explored in the full review of the nursing workforce.

Mental Health Nursing

Following the launch of the advertising campaign for Mental Health and Learning Disability nursing, sustained effort will be required at Trust and regional level to promote this branch of nursing and to attract potential students into the profession. It is suggested that school-leavers in particular are targeted. The success of the current campaign should also be further examined during the full review.

Summary of Recommendations

Learning Disability Nursing

Although this branch of nursing faces similar workforce issues to mental health nursing, there is a need to recognise this branch of nursing as separate to mental health nursing.

Queen's University Belfast should continue to consider the viability of a September enrolment. Again the full impact of the advertising campaign will also be examined in the next full review of the nursing profession.

The feasibility of a work based route for training learning disability nurses should be explored within current commissioned numbers. This would help ensure intake targets are met.

Children's Nursing

The growth in Children's services will need to be closely monitored. This will be further explored and considered as part of the full review.

Summary

Trusts must continue to recognise the need for adequate workforce planning including projections of service delivery needs. The recent appointment of nursing workforce leads in each of the trusts will greatly assist in the workforce planning process.

All of the issues discussed in this update review will be given further consideration in the full review of the Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting workforce, to be carried out this year.