

Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

29 July 2020

Dear Ms Hillier

Follow up on Public Accounts Committee evidence session on the NHS nursing workforce, 20 July 2020

I am writing to you regarding the Public Account Committee's ongoing inquiry into the NHS nursing workforce which opened on 15 June 2020. We shared our annual registration report with the Committee Clerk last week. Following the Committee's oral evidence session, I thought it would be helpful to provide some additional information from our registration report in support of the evidence already provided by your witnesses to assist you with this inquiry.

Our vision at the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the professional regulator of more than 700,000 nursing and midwifery professionals across the UK, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

We hold a significant amount of data on the entire nursing workforce in England and the other three UK nations. This covers all settings including the NHS, social care and in communities. The data, on both the register we set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and our permanent register, provides answers and context to some of the queries that were raised during the session. The figures included in this letter are presented as far as we can as nurses only, in recognition of the focus of your inquiry.

Our temporary register

During the oral evidence session, the committee discussed the temporary nursing workforce that has stepped up to support the NHS throughout the Covid-19 crisis and if any of these people had expressed an interest to join the permanent workforce.

As you will be aware, the Government introduced emergency legislation in March and this enabled us to set up our Covid-19 temporary register. This allows us to temporarily

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register fit, proper and suitably experienced people to practise if they want to and feel able to do so during the Covid-19 emergency.

We invited three groups to join the temporary register: in mid-March, those who had left our permanent register voluntarily up to three years ago; in early April, overseas nurses and midwives who were ready to sit their objective structured clinical examination (OSCE); and in mid-April, those who had left the register voluntarily four to five years ago.

After opening the temporary register on 27 March, 5,659 nurses with England as their country of registered address had joined by the end of that month. Our latest data shows there are now 11,300 nurses (11,179 registered as nurses and 121 as both nurses and midwives) and 2,452 overseas nurses (2,445 as nurses and seven as both nurses and midwives) on the temporary register with English addresses.

I have attached a copy of our latest Covid-19 information pack which breaks this data down in more detail and also outlines our response to the pandemic. I hope you find this helpful. We will send you and PAC members updated versions from now on.

Moving from temporary to permanent (Q10)

We are exploring how we can support all those temporary registrants who wish to join the permanent register to meet our permanent registration requirements.

While the response from the temporary registrants to the Covid crisis has been incredible, we know that many of those who had previously left our permanent register voluntarily have not been deployed. Addressing this is key to building people's motivation to return to the permanent register.

We are working with NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I), Health Education England (HEE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to enable these people to meet the practice hours requirement for permanent registration, as well as enabling them to feel valued.

We know that a much larger proportion of temporary overseas registrants have been deployed because many were already in the UK and had offers of work agreed before the pandemic. We know almost all of these people are keen to join the permanent register and we have helped them do this by reopening our OSCE test centres on 20 July. Working with our partners, we have taken the appropriate measures to ensure the safety of colleagues at the test centres and the candidates, particularly as many of the latter are black, Asian and minority ethnic professionals.

The reopening of these centres allows overseas applicants to take the test and, if successful, join our permanent register. Our current data shows that we have had 2,457 bookings to take the OSCE test since we announced that we would open these centres at the beginning of the month, 79 percent (1,951) of these come from the temporary register. The vast majority of these people have English addresses.

We have conducted a survey of our temporary registrants to help us better understand whether or not they are in employment, whether they would consider joining our permanent register, and their characteristics and experiences. We are close to making

this survey data public, including an EDI breakdown, and will share this with you as soon as we are able.

Annual registration data report

On 9 July, we released our annual registration data report, which explores the numbers of nurses, midwives and nursing associates joining and leaving our register from 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. The data shows that in 2019-20, our register grew from 520,630 nurses (514,750 registered as nurses and 5,881 as both nurses and midwives) with English addresses to 530,857 (525,073 as nurses and 5,784 people as both nurses and midwives).

The number of nurses (including those registered as both nurses and midwives) from outside the EEA with an address in England grew from 60,151 in 2018-2019 to 65,568 in 2019-20 and now comprise more than 10 percent of the people on our register living in England. Two countries in particular have fuelled the growth from outside the EEA: the Philippines and India. The total number of professionals on our permanent register who trained in these two countries rose from a combined total of 38,587 in 2018-2019 to 42,953 in 2019-2020.

However, while the increased figures from across the UK and overseas are very welcome we may no longer be able to rely on the flow of professionals joining our register from overseas because of the pandemic and subsequent travel restrictions.

Gender and the workforce (Q13)

Our report also shows that over the last five years there have been only fractional changes of the gender split on our permanent register. In England, 89 percent of nurses on our register identify as female, 11 percent as male. Just over 0.8 percent, 4,269 nurses, said their gender is not the same as it was at the time of birth.

Leavers in the NHS (Q50)

Since 2017, we have been running an annual leavers' survey to understand why people leave our register. The most recent data shows that in England over 13,152 nurses (this includes people registered as nurses and as both nurses and midwives) left our register between November 2018 and June 2019.

In October 2019, we invited a sample of these people to complete a survey about the reasons why they left the register. In total, 1,145 nurses (this includes people registered as nurses and as both nurses and midwives) whose last job before leaving our register was in England, responded to our leavers' survey. The three most commonly cited reasons for people leaving our register are the same as in previous years: retirement, too much pressure, and changes in personal circumstances.

You can find more data in our permanent register and leavers' survey [here](#).

I hope this information has been helpful. I would be delighted if I could meet you to speak further about our data and our support for the nursing workforce in the UK and

England in particular, along with my colleague Edward Welsh, our Director of Communications and Engagement. I will ask my colleagues to get in touch with your office to arrange a suitable date. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact Edward at Edward.welsh@nmc-uk.org.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Sutcliffe', enclosed within a light blue rectangular border.

Andrea Sutcliffe CBE
Chief Executive and Registrar

Enclosure: NMC Covid-19 information pack (24 July 2020)