



Welsh Affairs Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA Tel: 020 7219 1424

Email: welshcom@parliament.uk Website: www.parliament.uk

From the Chair of the Committee

Suzanne Rankin
Chief Executive
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Headquarters
University Hospital for Wales
Health Park
Cardiff
CF14 4XW

2 April 2024

Dear Suzanne,

The Welsh Affairs Committee is holding an inquiry into the [Impact of population change in Wales](#). Migration to Wales from other parts of the UK and internationally is an important part of population change in Wales, and we would like to understand the role of international migration in Wales's workforce. We are therefore reaching out to sector bodies and organisations to invite evidence about their perspectives.

We are particularly interested to learn more about the following:

- To what extent does international migration fill skills gaps in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales? We welcome any case studies you would like to share.
- Is the current immigration system, including the Skilled Worker visa, Health and Care Worker visa and Seasonal Worker visa, fit for purpose for both employers and prospective employees in Wales?
- What impact will announced changes to the immigration system, including the move to the Immigration Salary List and an increase in the general salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa, have on employers and recruitment in Wales?
- Should there be a made-for-Wales immigration pathway to enable businesses in Wales to more effectively recruit people from outside the UK, which addresses Wales-specific skills gaps and reflects median salaries in Wales?
- What is the role of international migration in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales in future?
- How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales?
- Is Wales effectively promoting its opportunities overseas, to attract people coming from outside the UK to Wales as a place to live and work?

The Committee would be grateful if responses to the questions above could be provided by **Friday 19th April**.



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Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP



GIG
CYMRU
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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale
University Health Board

Executive Headquarters / Pencadlys Gweithredol

Woodland House
Maes-y-Coed Road
Cardiff
CF14 4HH

Ty Coedtir
Ffordd Maes-y-Coed
Caerdydd
CF14 4HH

Eich cyf/Your ref:
Ein cyf/Our ref: SR-jtf-0424-10645
Welsh Health Telephone Network:
Direct Line/Llinell uniongychol: 029 2183 6010

Suzanne Rankin
Chief Executive

19 April 2024

Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP
Chair
Welsh Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Rt Hon Crabb

Inquiry into the Impact of Population Change in Wales

I refer to your letter dated 2 April 2024 in relation to the Welsh Affairs Committee inquiry being held into the Impact of population change in Wales.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry, please find below Cardiff & Vale University Health Board's response to the questions that have been asked by the Committee:

- **To what extent does international migration fill skills gaps in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales?**

International recruitment has played a part in filling skill gaps across NHS Wales for many years. However following Brexit and the Covid 19 pandemic, the reliance on international migration has increased significantly. This is mainly due to challenges in filling student places on nursing degree programs; the number recruited by universities has increased but there remains a gap to achieve the increased numbers commissioned by Health Boards and Trusts.

Universities in Wales have now started recruiting international students into undergraduate nurse degree programmes, the first output will be March 2027.

Outlined below are the UHB commissioned education numbers with partner HEIs:

Commissioning Year	Year output of	Adult	Child	Mental Health	Learning Disability
2020	2024	484	82	116	5
2024	2027	447	120	101	1

We have successfully recruited the following numbers of Internationally Educated Nurses (IEN) and those on Adaptation programmes since 2019:

Year	IEN	Adaptation for IEN in UK	Total
2019 – 2020	26	18	44
2020 –2021	49	3	52
2021 – 2022	164	8	172
2022 – 2023	144	2	146
2023 –2024	17	10	27
2024 – 2025 to date	3 + 6 to arrive	2	11

45 IEN, who were already in the UK have been recruited and trained as Band 4 Assistant Practitioners, with an option of progressing into a Registered Nurse role. This has created an additional recruitment pipeline that we didn't previously have.

From the 45 IEN's: 12 have moved to the OSCE programme to gain registration and 33 will join the NMC register when eligible.

Certificate of Sponsorship (COS)

Medical Workforce

The UHB has seen an increase in the number of Certificates of Sponsorship assigned since Brexit and we anticipate this trend will continue into 24/25. Numbers are outlined below:

Year	Total
2019 – 2020	47
2020 –2021	43
2021 – 2022	51
2022 – 2023	80
2023 –2024	112
2024 – 2025 to date	18

Nursing Workforce

Year	New	Renewals	Total
2019-2020	28	3	31
2020-2021	44	2	46
2021-2022	174	1	175
2022-2023	226	27	253
2023-2024	133	0	133
2024-2025 to date	41	32	73

N.B. More than 1 COS may be applicable to an individual as they move to different roles e.g. progression from a B4 Assistant Practitioner into a Registered Nurse role.

If the UHB are successful in retaining the staff for which COS have been issued, this will create a significant ongoing cost pressure for

- **Is the current immigration system, including the Skilled Worker visa, Health and Care Worker visa and Seasonal Worker visa, fit for purpose for both employers and prospective employees in Wales?**

We have assumed that the question is based on the rules before the changes occurred on 4th April 2024. Prior to April 2024 NHS Wales could sponsor a wide range of applicants that wished to work in NHS Wales under a wide range of positions. It was uncommon that NHS Wales was unable to sponsor someone due to salary, on this basis the system would be considered fit for purpose for both employees and employers.

The UHB have some concerns that the new rules may prevent us sponsoring a small number of non-clinical roles that we were able to provide sponsorship for previously. The new rules may also impact negatively on staff who are already in our employment. That said there is no negative impact to our Medical and Dental or Nursing workforce as they are on a Health and Care visa.

- **What impact will the announced changes to the immigration system, including the move to the Immigration Salary List and an increase in the general salary threshold for the Skilled Worker visa, have on employers and recruitment in Wales?**

It will have a significant impact as it is now more difficult to sponsor lower paid non-Health and Care Visa employees for example employees in IT, Finance, Workforce, etc – as these roles will not have any exemption to the increase in general salary. That said, the majority of sponsorships assigned by NHS Wales and the UHB are to those under the Health and Care Visa which mostly is unchanged.

The biggest change under a Health and Care Visa are to those under Biomedical Scientist SOC code. The salary threshold has risen for Biomedical Scientist despite them being under the Health and Care Visa, this means the pay would be too low to meet the required salary threshold. It is worth stating that these changes will not impact any employees that are already on a Skilled Worker CoS (current employer or not), as they are exempt from the increase in salary threshold.

To date, the UHB has not recruited any Biomedical Scientists from overseas and there are no immediate plans to do so.

There will be a significant impact on recruitment to Administrative roles due to the new general salary threshold for the skilled worker visa being significantly higher than previously. This means it will be difficult to recruit anyone below a band 7.

Again, no impact for our Nursing and Medical workforce.

- **Should there be a made-for-Wales immigration pathway to enable businesses in Wales to more effectively recruit people from outside the UK, which addresses Wales-specific skills gaps and reflects median salaries in Wales?**

The majority of Sponsorships that NHS Wales assign come under the Health and Care visa, which is based on Agenda for Change salary rates rather than a general threshold. However, there are many positions in NHS Wales that are not on the Health and Care Visa list, which would need to meet the increased general threshold. Therefore, there is a case to suggest that there should be an NHS pathway to encompass the positions that UKVI do not class as Health and Care but are recruited and required in NHS Wales.

- **What is the role of international migration in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales in future?**

NHS Wales through Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) has embarked on a series of programs aimed at increasing the numbers of nurses for Wales. This has included increasing bursary commissioned places at university for nursing degrees and increases in career pathways from Healthcare Support Workers to registered nursing. As mentioned earlier, Universities in Wales have now started recruiting international students into undergraduate nurse degree programmes.

The Chief Nursing Officer and Welsh Government have agreed to pursue the introduction of Registered Nurse Associates (RNA) who will commence training in September 2025. Robust workforce planning will need to be undertaken in the UHB to include a review of workforce models to determine how many RNA will need to be commissioned and what impact will this have on existing B4 AP's.

The commissioned numbers for pre-registration nurse education places have increased year on year, for example 2020/21 saw a 7.2% increase and 2021/22 seeing a 10% increase. Whilst this is a positive step forward in addressing the current nursing workforce shortages, Higher Education Institutions in Wales have been experiencing challenges in recruiting to the commissioned numbers from UK domiciles. This downturn in applications is mirrored across England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This is partly due to UK demographics and the competing demand with other professions/roles.

For the foreseeable future international migration will play a significant part in filling the skills gap across the NHS in Wales. The implementation of the All-Wales International Recruitment Program and the Kerala memorandum of understanding has created sustainable pathways for recruiting health professionals to fill skill gaps across NHS Wales. However, there are still significant challenges to onboarding large numbers of international health professionals due to issues related to housing and public transport, a problem we have encountered in Cardiff. Positively, the Health and Social Care Minister has recently agreed a £5m nonrecurrent investment for NHS Wales in 2024/2025 for recruiting Nurses and Medics from overseas.

- **How has Brexit impacted the recruitment of EU citizens to work in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board in Wales?**

It is difficult to quantify the exact impact of Brexit on the recruitment of EU citizens, due to a number of factors, these include the gap between the vote in 2016 and the removal of free movement in early 2020, which was then compounded by the pandemic in 2020 which prevented recruitment from outside of the UK for a number of months. However, it would be wrong to state that between 2016 and the removal of free movement in January 2020, that the decision to leave the EU had no effect on recruitment from the EU. EU citizens may have viewed the UK decision to leave the EU as a country in a negative way.

For Cardiff & Vale University Health Board the European Nurses that were employed had already left the organisation before Brexit and most of the Medical posts recruited to from overseas are from outside the EU currently. That said we are starting to see an increase from EU applicants.

- **Is Wales effectively promoting its opportunities overseas, to attract people coming from outside the UK to Wales as a place to live and work?**

All Wales - Train Work Live (TWL) campaign:

TWL national and international attraction campaigns market NHS Wales as an attractive place for healthcare professionals to train and work, as well as showcasing the benefits of living in Wales. These campaigns support the supply of the current NHS Wales workforce and contribute to the workforce pipeline to meet the future demands.

TWL launched its first campaign in 2016, a medical campaign to attract doctors, with a focus on GPs. TWL has since been developed to include Nursing and Midwifery, Pharmacy, Dental and Mental Health campaigns.

Recruitment activity has and continues to be undertaken on a local level by Health Boards, or by individual GP practices, as well as by HEIW and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP). Each Health Board and Trust has their own local identity and therefore their own marketing approach. The TWL campaign has provided a more consistent approach with a national identity and supportive messaging. TWL campaigns are run on an All-Wales basis.

The UHB has representation on the TWL campaign for both the Nursing and Medical workforce.

All Wales International Recruitment Programme

Since November 2021, NHS Wales has adopted a collaborative approach to its international recruitment via a central programme, thus strengthening its brand and identity in the overseas markets. The NHS in Wales has undertaken several in-country recruitment events with assistance from international government partnerships to aid its attraction campaign, and successfully

facilitate recruitment (to employment) of suitably qualified healthcare professionals into the health sector in Wales. On the 1st March 2024 and on behalf of the health and social care sector in Wales, the Welsh Health Minister, Eluned Morgan, signed a formal agreement with the Government of Kerala to bring qualified healthcare professionals from India to work in NHS Wales, thus formalising a successful future partnership and recruitment pipeline.

The table below shows the numbers of Nurses attracted through this campaign, it important to note that the UHB only requested support to fill 16 hard to fill roles in NICU and Endoscopy.

All Wales International Recruitment - Nursing and Medics - Headcount		
Health Body	Onboarded	
	FY 22/23	FY 23/24
ABUHB	52	79
CTMUHB	96	45
Velindre	0	15
BCUHB	28	150
CAVUHB	135	16
HDUHB	100	101
PTHB	6	13
SBUHB	0	59
Total	417	464

The UHB has been successful in increasing the number of Registered Nurses we attract from local Universities via the student streamlining process. This alone with other recruitment channels has enabled us to reduce our vacancy rate significantly. The cost of recruiting IEN was a major factor in the UHB's decision to only source 'hard to fill' roles from the International Recruitment campaign, as well as the significant improvement in the vacancy position.

I hope our responses to the questions asked help inform your inquiry, please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any additional information.

Yours sincerely



Suzanne Rankin
Chief Executive

cc Rachel Gidman, Executive Director of People & Culture

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r Fro yw enw gweithredol Bwyrd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is the operational name of Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board

Croesawir y Bwrdd ohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. Sicrhawn byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn eich dewis iaith. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi
The Board welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English. We will ensure that we will communicate in your chosen language. Correspondence in Welsh will not lead to a delay

