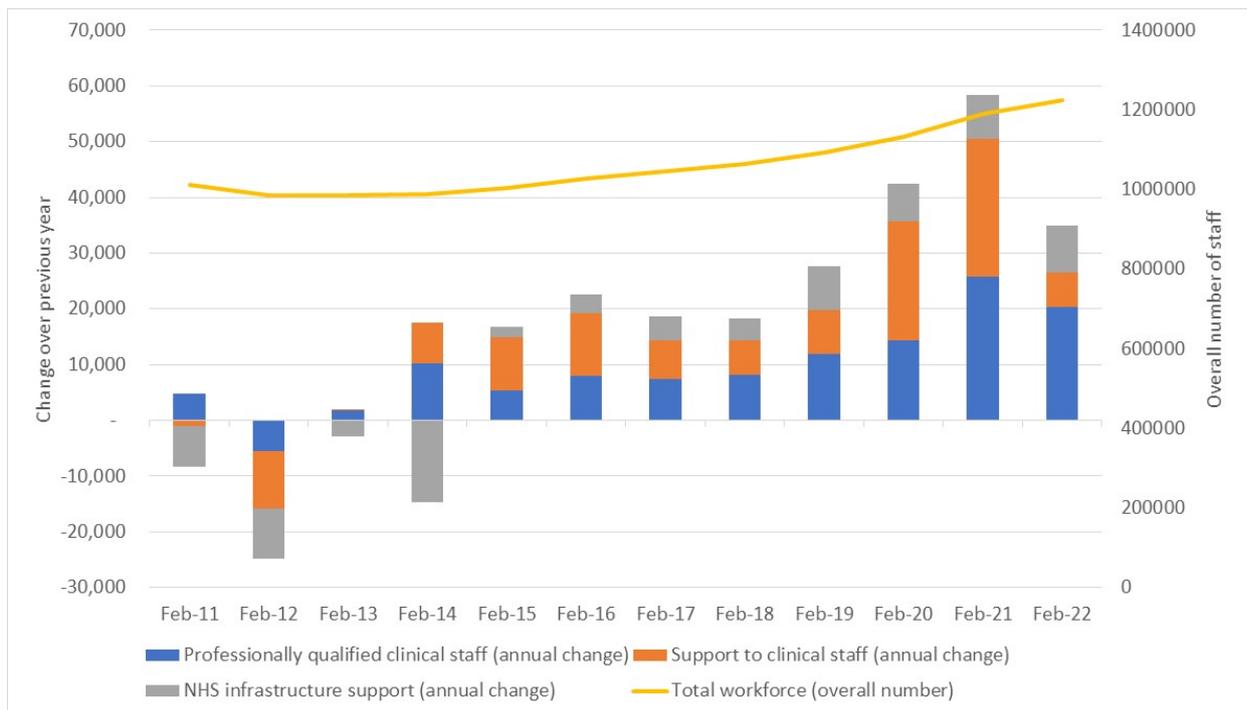


Supplementary written evidence submitted by The Nuffield Trust (EPW0088)

The Nuffield Trust is an independent think tank which uses research and policy analysis to improve health care in the UK. As requested by the Committee, this submission presents some charts on progress against key workforce commitments.

Overall, the NHS hospital and community health workforce in England has grown by 209,501 (21%) full-time equivalent staff in the 11 years to 2022 (see figure 1). Increases have been particularly evident from 2018 onwards.

Figure 1. Change in staff over previous year and overall trend (full-time equivalents)

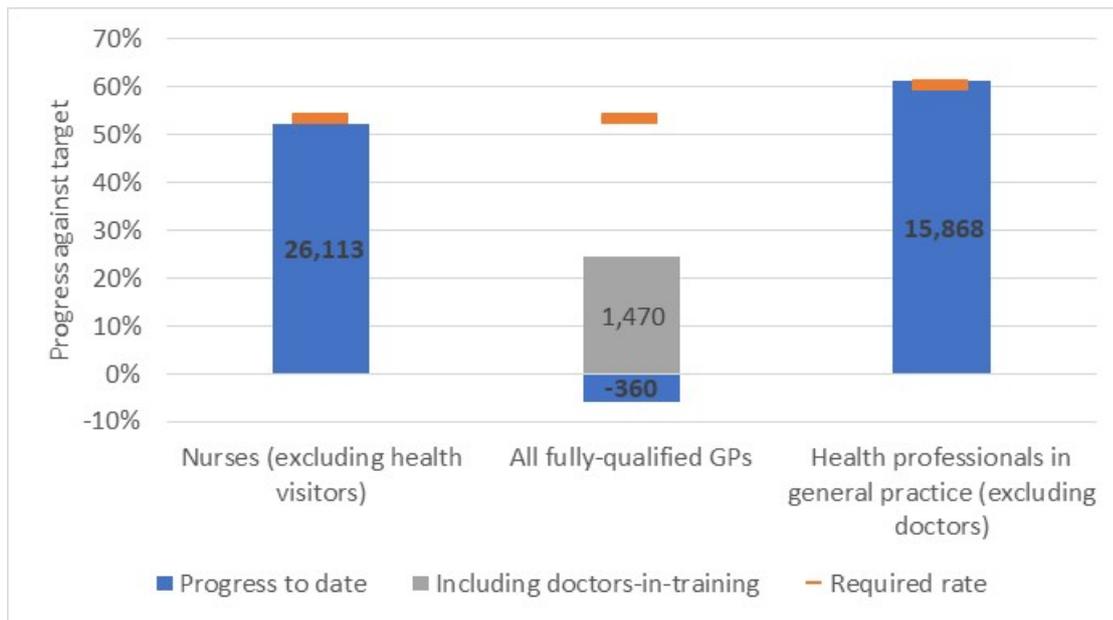


Notes: Data are for full-time equivalent NHS staff working in health and community health services up to February 2022.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital data

The government set out ambitious targets in its 2019 general election manifesto, including a commitment to increase the number of nurses working in the NHS by 50,000 by the end of this parliament. Ambitions were also outlined for general practice such as boosting the number of doctors by 6,000 and increasing other health professionals by 26,000. The latest data shows varied progress for these ambitions (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Progress against government ambitions for the NHS workforce



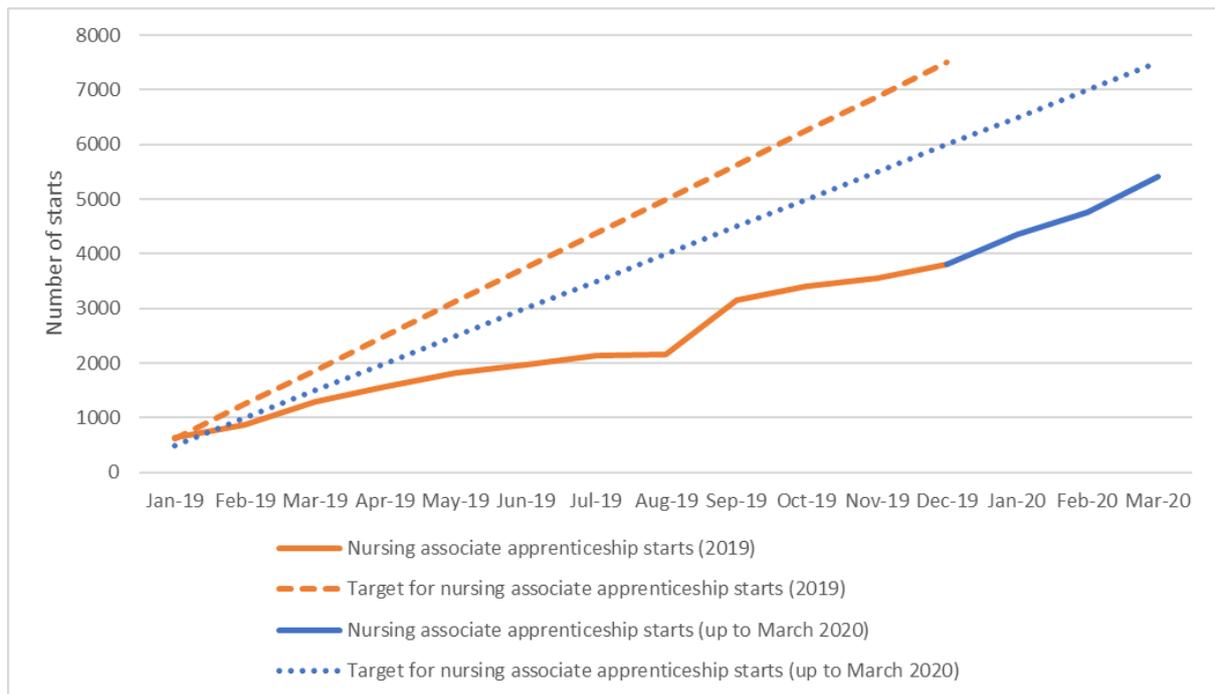
Notes: Data up to March 2022. Non-medical general practice workforce includes those employed by Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and directly by practices; we have had to make assumptions on missing PCN data to estimate a total figure. Baseline figures are December 2019 except for non-medical health professions in general practice, which uses a baseline figure of March 2019.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital data

While the number of nurses and the number of health professionals (excluding GPs) appear to currently be on track to meet their respective targets, the number of fully-qualified GPs has seen a net decrease. Even when including doctors in training, these increases are still not sufficient to be on track to deliver 6,000 more doctors in general practice by 2024.

An older government target to train 7,500 nursing associates in 2019 was set by then-Secretary of State for Health Jeremy Hunt; the timeframe then shifted to by the end of March 2020. The number of nursing associate apprenticeship starts in 2019 was 3,812. Even when including the extension of the target to March 2020, only 5,407 people started a nursing associate apprenticeship – below the target of 7,500.

Figure 3. Number of people starting nursing associate apprenticeships in 2019



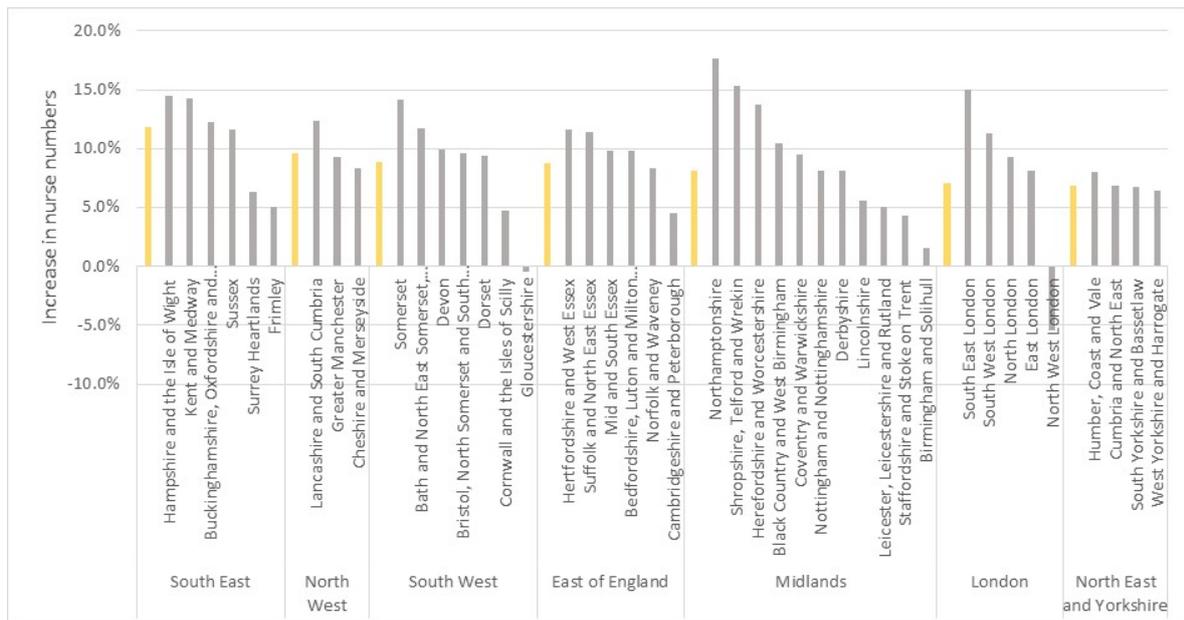
Notes: Data show the number of people starting a nursing associate apprenticeship and includes places that have been funded through the apprenticeship levy, as well as through other means. The orange chart lines show the progress made against the nursing associate apprenticeship target in 2019 only, and the blue chart lines show the progress over the extended timeframe up to March 2020.

Source: Department for Education

However, focussing on a national target provides limited assurance about whether regional and local staffing levels are sufficient. There is a risk that focussing on national, high-level targets will increase these disparities further, which in turn can widen the gap in patient access and quality of care between regions.

There are regional variations in nursing levels with the North East and Yorkshire seeing the lowest growth and South East leading the pack (see figure 4). There are also substantial geographical differences in changes in nurse numbers – including some decreases – within these regions. There has also been considerable variation, by region, in the GP trend (see figure 5)

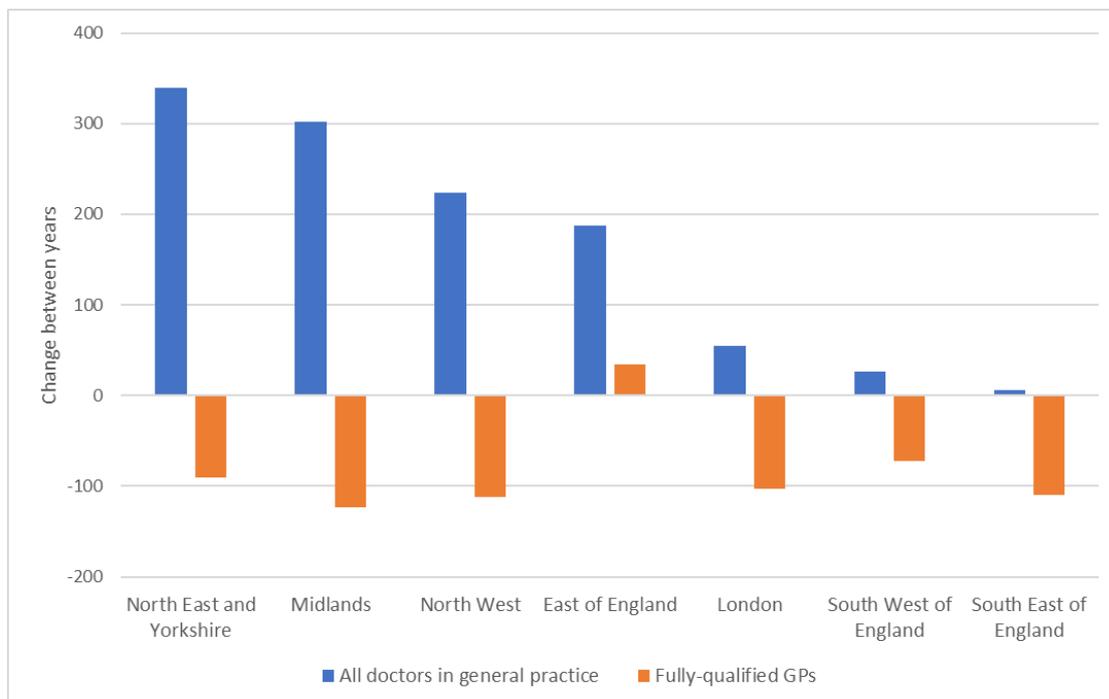
Figure 4. Regional changes in nurse numbers, December 2019 to March 2022



Notes: Data show the changes in the number of full-time equivalent nurses working in hospital and community health settings and general practice between December 2019 and March 2022, by NHS England region (yellow bars) and ICS (grey bars). Health visitors are excluded.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital data

Figure 5. Change in doctors in general practice, December 2019 to April 2022 (full-time equivalents)

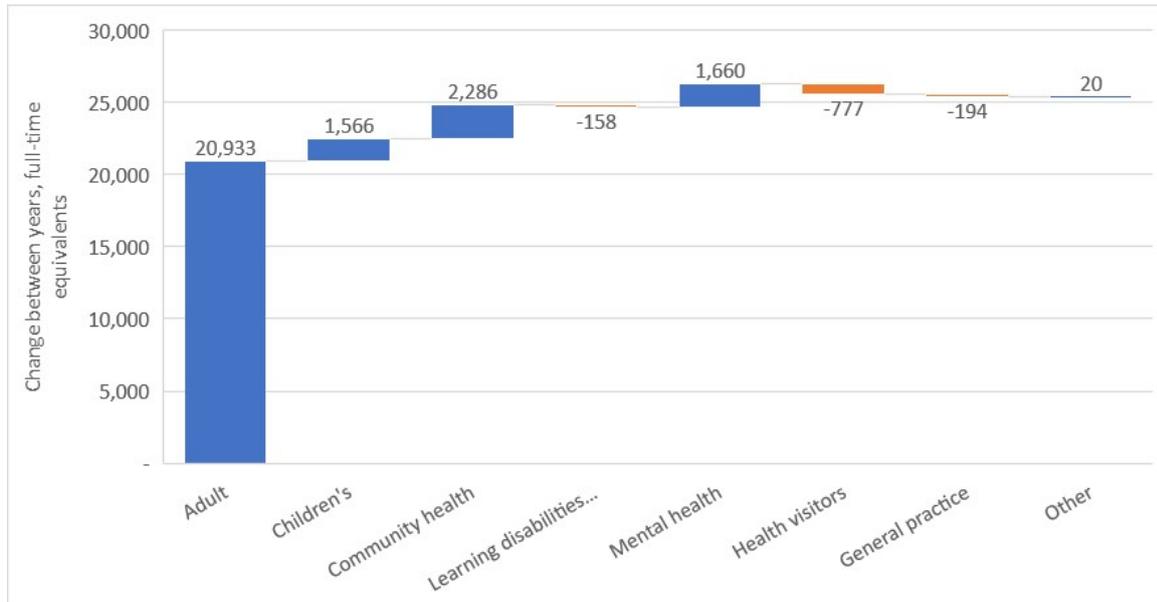


Notes: Data show the absolute difference in the total number of full-time equivalent doctors working in general practice (blue bars) and the difference when only including fully-qualified GPs (orange bars) between December 2019 and April 2022.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital data

The same argument can be applied to certain specialties or care settings. For example, while the overall increase in nurse numbers is welcome, health visitors, as well as those working in general practice and learning disability services, have actually fallen (see figure 6).

Figure 6. Change in nursing numbers by care setting, December 2019 to March 2022

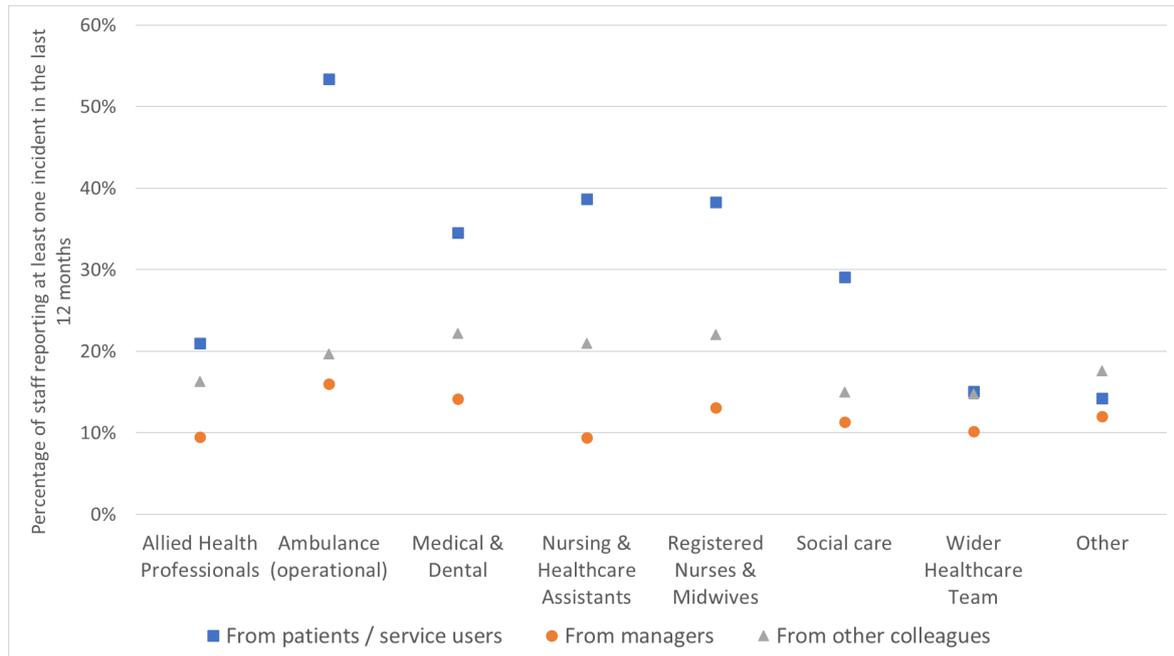


Notes: Data show the difference in the number of full-time equivalent nurses by care setting between December 2019 and March 2022.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of NHS Digital data

NHS staff still reported experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse at work in the 2021 staff survey. Incidents vary widely between staff groups – while over half (53%) of ambulance staff report at least one instance of abuse from patients, 21% of allied health professionals report this experience. However, it is clear that the level of abuse received by staff from patients, managers and colleagues remains high (see figure 7).

Figure 7. Staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse at work in the last 12 months by staff group, 2021



Notes: Data are based on responses to the 2021 NHS staff survey. The survey covers those working in hospital and community settings only. Allied Health Professionals includes healthcare scientists and scientific & technical staff.

Source: Nuffield Trust analysis of the 2021 NHS staff survey

June 2022