

## **Supplementary written evidence submitted by the Royal College of Nursing**

Letter from Howard Catton, Head of Policy and International, Royal College of Nursing,  
to the Chair of the Committee, dated 10 November 2015

I am writing to you following the Committee's evidence session on 20 October 2015 as part of its inquiry into immigration and skills shortages, at which I appeared as a witness. I am grateful for the opportunity to give evidence on the impact of changes to immigration rules on the nursing workforce, and would like to emphasise to the Committee the importance of the Government's decision to place nursing on the Shortage Occupation List (SOL), and the need for this to remain the case after February 2016. The RCN will be submitting evidence to the recently announced Migration Advisory Committee consultation on the issue, and I am happy to share this with the Committee once it is complete.

During the evidence session I committed to sending statistics on the availability of nurse training places and the number of overseas nurses working in the UK. The answers to these points are outlined below, however, if it would be useful to the Committee, also attached is a short background note which places many of these figures in the context of current and longer term workforce trends.

### **Commissioned nurse training places**

The last time there was a significant shortage of nurses, the Department of Health in England responded by increasing student training places to 24,527 in 2004/5. However, training places have fallen gradually, hitting a low of only 17,442 places in 2012/13. Since then, the number of training places have begun to increase to 20,183 places being commissioned in 2015/16.

The RCN would argue that as a minimum commissions should return to the 2004/5 level. However, the RCN would suggest exceeding this number for several years to help address the serious shortage, to ensure safe staffing levels and help the UK move towards self-sufficiency.

Meanwhile, from 2009 to 2014 there was a 33 per cent increase in the number of people applying to study nursing in England. In 2014, only 40 per cent of those applying to train as a nurse were accepted onto a course, with over 30,000 potential students turned away. While not all of those applicants would have been suitable for nursing careers, it is clear that there is an increasing appetite to join the nursing profession and that the UK has the potential to grow a domestic nursing workforce to meet future demands.

### **Nurses working in the UK from abroad**

Using data provided by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) we calculated the number of nurses joining the UK labour market from outside the EEA each year since 2011, and who would be impacted by proposed changes to immigration rules.

This was set out in our report *International Recruitment 2015*<sup>1</sup> and has previously been provided to the Committee. In our attached note we have provided the number of initial registrations on the NMC register over a ten year period, broken down by EEA and Non-EEA in tabulated and graph format.

Using the NMC data that we hold, it is not possible to establish if those overseas nurses who joined the register between 1994/5 and 2014/5 are still working in the UK. The NMC may be able to provide a live snapshot of the register to determine how many people are currently on the register are from outside the UK. The Committee would have to request this information directly from the NMC.

I hope this information will be useful to the Committee, if you require any further information, please contact Owain Mumford, Parliamentary Officer.

Howard Catton  
Head of Policy and International

## **Annex**

### **RCN Further Evidence to the Home Affairs Committee Inquiry on Immigration and Skills Shortage**

#### **Nurses in the UK**

There is no centralised data collection which shows the number of nurses working in the UK. The NHS collects data on how many nurses are working in the NHS and is beginning to collect data from other providers who provide NHS care. There is no data concerning those who work in the independent sector, while data from social care is also inconsistent.

Nursing and midwifery are regulated professions and at present the only data available which shows the total pool of nurses able to work in the UK is the regulator's, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), register. The latest NMC Annual Report states that on 31 March 2014 there were 680,858 nurses and midwives on the UK register. However, it should be noted that some nurses stay on the register even if they are not currently working in practice, and many nurses work in non-clinical roles such as education. This will change in future as nurses will be made to revalidate to remain on the register.

We have included below, for context, the number of nurses and midwives (headcount) on the register working in the NHS across the UK, broken down by country:

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/629530/International-Recruitment-2015.pdf](https://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/629530/International-Recruitment-2015.pdf)

- England - 356,275 (July 2015)<sup>2</sup>
- Scotland - 67,909 (June 2015)<sup>3</sup>
- Northern Ireland -16,837 (March 2015)<sup>4</sup>
- Wales - 25,456 (September 2015).<sup>5</sup>

As stated above, the precise numbers working in social care or for non-NHS providers is unknown.

## Immigration trends

To help evidence the on-going nursing shortage in the UK to the Migration Advisory Committee last year, the RCN reviewed immigration trends. The RCN requested information from the NMC to establish how many nurses joined the register from overseas, in order to get the latest available data.

### Numbers of new entrants (initial registrations) to the UK nursing register for each year, comprising:

- Total number of new entrants
- Number of new entrants from UK sources
- Number of new entrants from EU countries (not including UK)
- Number of new entrants from non-EU countries; and
- Number of international entrants in 2013/14 to the UK nursing register (EU and non-EU) by country of origin

Figure 1 shows the total number of people from outside the UK registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) in each year from 1994/5 to 2014/15.

The last time the UK experienced a significant shortage in registered nurses was in the early 2000s. As a result, the UK's reliance on internationally recruited nurses peaked with the UK recruiting over 16,000 nurses in 2001-2; the vast majority from outside the EEA.

As Figure 1 shows, there has been a significant shift with the majority of internationally recruited nurses since 2010 have been recruited from within the EEA. For the first time, more nurses trained in Europe saw the UK as a viable option for employment. We believe that there is a strong correlation between increased flow of nurses within the EEA and the 2007-8 economic crash. Furthermore, changes to the immigration and visa systems have also contributed to the decrease in the number of nurses working in the UK from outside the EEA.

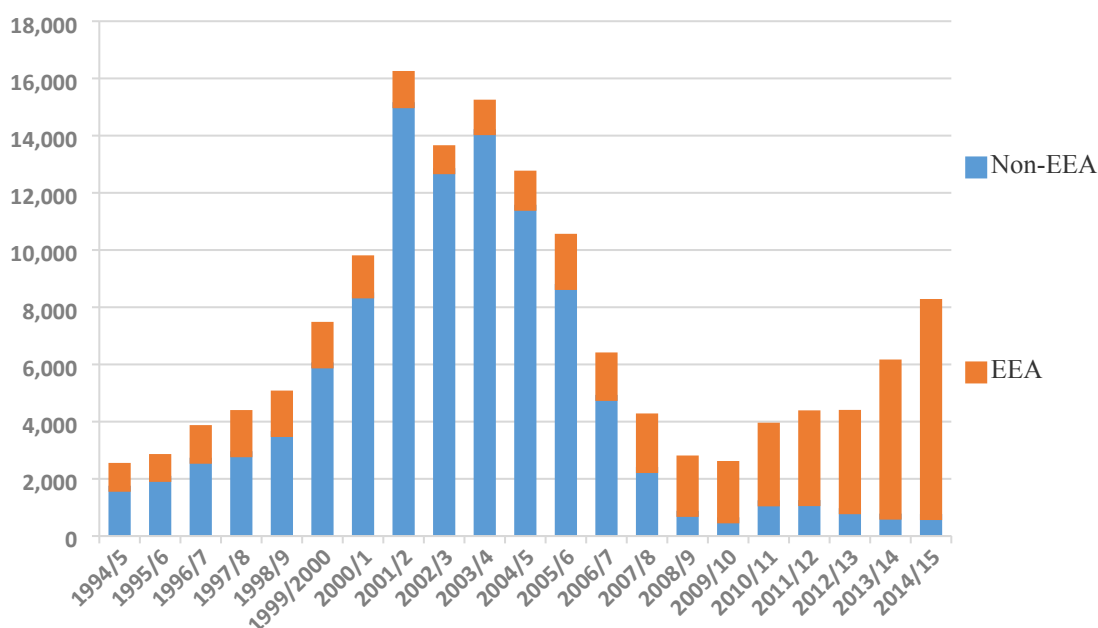
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB18527/nhs-work-stat-jul-2015-nat-tab.xls>

<sup>3</sup> <https://isdscotland.scot.nhs.uk/Health-Topics/Workforce/Publications/2015-09-01/2015-09-01-Workforce-Report.pdf?25623720885>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hscwc-march-2015.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Staff/Non-Medical-Staff/Nursing-Midwifery-and-Health-Visitors/nursingstaff-by-grade-year>

**Fig 1: Initial registrations on the NMC register broken down by EEA and Non-EEA**



**Source: NMC freedom of information request, May 2015**

Using the data provided by the NMC we calculated the number of nurses joining the UK labour market from outside the EEA each year since 2011, and who would be impacted by proposed changes to immigration rules. This was set out in our report *International Recruitment 2015* and has previously been provided to the Committee.

The raw data that the NMC provided over sequential requests is contained in the table below.

**Table 1: Initial registrations on the NMC register broken down by EEA and Non-EEA**

Year	Non-EEA	EEA	Total
1990/1	2,550	813	3,363
1991/2	2,376	662	3,038
1992/3	2,203	646	2,849
1993/4	1,665	456	2,121
1994/5	1,654	798	2,452
1995/6	1,999	763	2,762
1996/7	2,633	1,141	3,774
1997/8	2,861	1,439	4,300
1998/9	3,568	1,413	4,981
1999/2000	5,967	1,416	7,383

2000/1	8,414	1,295	<b>9,709</b>
2001/2	15,064	1,091	<b>16,155</b>
2002/3	12,757	802	<b>13,559</b>
2003/4	14,122	1,030	<b>15,152</b>
2004/5	11,477	1,193	<b>12,670</b>
2005/6	8,709	1,753	<b>10,462</b>
2006/7	4,830	1,484	<b>6,314</b>
2007/8	2,309	1,872	<b>4,181</b>
2008/9	775	1,936	<b>2,711</b>
2009/10	549	1,970	<b>2,519</b>
2010/11	1,143	2,715	<b>3,858</b>
2011/12	1,152	3,137	<b>4,289</b>
2012/13	869	3,436	<b>4,305</b>
2013/14	679	5,388	<b>6,067</b>
2014/15	665	7,518	<b>8,183</b>

Source: NMC

Unfortunately, from the NMC data that we hold it is not possible to establish if the nurses who joined the register are still working in the UK. It may be possible for the NMC to be able to take a live snapshot of the register to determine how many are currently on the register from outside the UK. The Committee would have to request this information directly from the NMC.

### Department of Health for England student commissions

The Government in England's cuts to student nursing commissions from 2010 have contributed significantly to the shortage of nurses in England. This is having a strong impact on the current supply domestically given that it takes three years for student nurses to qualify and join the labour market.

**Table 2: Department for Health for England nurse training place commissions**

Planned	Total planned commissions
2004/5	<b>24,527</b>
2005/6	<b>24,380</b>
2006/7	<b>22,800</b>
2007/8	<b>21,359</b>
2008/9	<b>21,472</b>

2009/10	21,046
2010/11	20,138
2011/12	17,903
2012/13	17,442
2013/14	18,056
2014/15	19,206
2015/16	20,183

**Source:** <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-02-09/223887/> and HEE Workforce Plan for England 2015/16 <http://hee.nhs.uk/wp-content/blogs.dir/321/files/2012/08/HEE-investing-in-people-2015.pdf>

In calling for further increases to student commissions, we acknowledge that their needs to be a sufficient supply of people wanting to pursue a career in nursing. Data we have obtained from UCAS shows that there has been a 33 per cent increase in the number of people applying to study nursing in the last five years. Furthermore, in 2014, only 40 per cent of those applying to train as a nurse were accepted onto a course; with over 30,000 applicants being turned away for a course.

This goes some way to challenge the common assumption that people in England do not want a career as a nurse. There is certainly the potential to grow a larger domestic nursing workforce to meet future demands.

## Background

The Committee might find it useful to refer to the RCN's [International Recruitment 2015 report](#) published in June 2015, which looked at trends in international recruitment and the impact of immigration changes on those nurses working in the UK on a Tier 2 visa.

The Committee might also find it useful to refer to the RCN's most recent report on trends in the nursing workforce across the NHS, [The Fragile Frontline](#), which was published in April 2015.

## November 2015