



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Health & Social Care Committee
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17 February 2023

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the invitation to attend a general scrutiny session with the Health & Social Care Committee on Thursday 26 January to discuss my priorities and the wider issues affecting nurses and nursing in Wales.

You requested further information on:

- the technological barriers preventing the collection and publishing of data on nurse vacancies at an all-Wales level, and the work being done to address this; and
- information on the work done to reduce the spend on agency nursing prior to the pandemic, and how the current level of agency spend compares with the pre-pandemic level.

Please note the publication on 1 February 2023 of the [National Workforce Implementation Plan](#) which outlines a series of time-specific actions including vacancy data publication and agency spend reduction that will act as enablers to accelerate the work underway as part of the “A Healthier Wales: Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care Workforce”.

This implementation plan sets out the following actions:

By June 2023

- Welsh Government will publish NHS Wales vacancy data for the directly employed workforce.

By September 2023

- Welsh Government will review with NHS organisations the approach to collection of workforce data and its robustness and ensure that this data provides an accurate and consistent basis for understanding our workforce and decision-making across Wales;
- Based on the data review, Welsh Government will establish a timetable for the publication of a national workforce dashboard to bring transparency the progress and priorities across the workforce in Wales;
- HEIW will work with partners to improve the quality, availability and access to workforce data, and will develop a national workforce data methodology and model to assess workforce supply and demand.



By July 2023

- Welsh Government will work with partners to standardise additional hours pay rates for both secondary care and primary care to ensure they are attractive to the workforce and sustainable to the organisations;
- Welsh Government will work with partners to introduce a refreshed control framework to ensure staff agency spend is reduced to maximise value for money.

Further detail on the technological barriers preventing the collection and publishing of data on nurse vacancies at an all-Wales level, and the work being done to address this;

Due the nature of how NHS vacancy data is defined and collected locally by individual health boards and trusts, it is important to provide a single and consistent way of reporting vacancies to ensure robust data is available to stakeholders and users. Officials have considered a number of existing workforce data sources, namely the Electronic Staff Record Data Warehouse maintained by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), and the Trac system maintained by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership (NWSSP). Having discussed with both HEIW and NWSSP both organisations agree that these sources would not be able to provide a consistent, reliable and accurate number of vacancies in NHS Wales. Officials have also been working with NHS Wales Assistant Directors of Workforce & OD and finance leads to implement an approach which will take the difference between the number of reported full-time equivalent permanent or fixed-term staff and planned workforce levels. The Welsh Government has committed to publishing NHS Wales vacancy data by June 2023.

Work is underway to understand, mitigate and address the increased reliance on agency workforce. Whilst it is understood the pressures on the core NHS workforce and services in recent years have necessitated this flexible and additional resource, action will be taken this year, in line with a wider NHS workforce implementation plan, to focus on a more sustainable workforce in NHS in Wales.

	Agency/Locum (premium) Expenditure				As a % of Total Pay %
	Medical & Dental £000's	Nursing & Midwifery £000's	Other Temp Staffing £000's	Total £000's	
2014-15 Annual Expenditure	40,956	28,720	18,110	87,787	
2015-16 Annual Expenditure	62,057	45,903	27,257	135,218	
2016-17 Annual Expenditure	77,348	53,846	33,163	164,358	4.7%
2017-18 Annual Expenditure	60,033	51,431	24,259	135,724	3.7%
2018-19 Annual Expenditure	54,622	65,440	23,577	143,640	3.8%
2019-20 Annual Expenditure	60,646	81,605	34,544	176,795	4.2%
2020-21 Annual Expenditure	58,600	94,429	46,115	199,144	4.1%
2021-22 Annual Expenditure	66,468	133,429	71,134	271,031	5.3%

The increase in NHS expenditure on Agency workforce in recent years is not sustainable in the longer term. Investment instead needs to be directed to increasing and effectively deploying a core workforce directly employed by the NHS in Wales. This will require a fine balance between ensuring sufficient capacity to deliver safe and effective services, whilst actions are underway which provide a sustainable workforce and value for money in the longer term.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Franka', written in a cursive style.

**CHIEF NURSING OFFICER
NURSE DIRECTOR NHS WALES
PRIF SWYDDOG NYRSIO
CYFARWYDDWR NYRS GIG CYMRU**