

NATIONAL QUALITY BOARD

**Ensuring that we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place,
at the right time: Nursing, Midwifery and Care Staffing**

A paper from Jane Cummings, NHS England

Purpose

1. The focus on nursing, midwifery and care staffing as a key determinant of the quality of care experienced by patients has become increasingly sharp over recent months. Recent reports – including Robert Francis’s report into events at Mid-Staffordshire hospital, Prof Sir Bruce Keogh’s review into hospitals with elevated mortality rates, and Don Berwick’s review into patient safety – all highlighted the importance of ensuring appropriate nursing staffing capacity and capability, and outlined the need to do some further work to support providers and commissioners in this area. More recently, the Health Select Committee called for greater transparency around staffing levels, recommending that hospitals should clearly display the actual number of nurses and healthcare assistants present on wards, versus the numbers that should be present. There has been significant and sustained media interest in this area.
2. At the NQB meeting in July 2013, there was a brief discussion about producing a ‘How to’ guide to support the system in relation to nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability. It was thought that the publication of guidance on getting staffing right for nursing, midwifery and care staff should be endorsed by the NQB, demonstrating organisations taking a system wide approach to address the issues.

3. This paper explains the background to work underway in this area, and asks a number of questions on how best to progress this work. It seeks the views of NQB members on:

- the approach to developing expectations on nurse staffing capability and capacity to underpin a more detailed 'How to' guide, the latest draft of which are set out in Annex A;
- a number of issues that need to be worked through in developing the expectations and fuller 'How to' guide; and
- whether and when NQB guidance on establishing safe nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability should be published.

Background

4. *Compassion in Practice*, published in December 2012, set out a vision for nursing, midwifery and care staff across the NHS. One of six areas for action identified in the report focussed on staffing, and the importance of ensuring that the right people, with the right skills, are in the right place at the right time.
5. This area includes a range of actions which are designed to strengthen workforce planning, staffing skills and staff capacity across NHS providers. One of these actions is to produce good practice guidance to support sisters, charge nurses, team leaders and directors of nursing with safe and effective staffing.
6. The need to improve staffing capacity and capability was also raised in the Francis Inquiry's final report, by Prof Sir Bruce Keogh in his Review of Mortality Outliers (where nurse staffing shortages were identified as contributing to poor quality care), and by Don Berwick in his review of patient safety.
7. The NQB briefly discussed publication of a 'How to' guide on nursing, midwifery and care staffing at its meeting on 16 July, and it was thought that guidance on this subject should be endorsed by the NQB. It was recognised that ahead of any publication, a substantive discussion on this topic was required at the next NQB meeting.

Draft Expectations

8. NHS England has been working with a cross-system steering group, and with organisations represented on the NQB, to take forward the development of guidance on staffing, as part of the overall staffing workstream from *Compassion in Practice*. This work has led to the development of a draft set of expectations in relation to nursing, midwifery, and care staffing capacity and capability. Rather than specifying exactly what staffing capacity and capability should be provided within organisations, the expectations seek to support provider organisations in making the right staffing decisions.
9. These expectations could form the basis of a 'How to' guide as was discussed at the July NQB meeting, which would be a more detailed piece of guidance setting out more detail on each expectation, and setting them within the wider context, including the workforce planning architecture. It would have a practical focus, highlighting roles and responsibilities, and pointing organisations towards available and forthcoming tools and resources. It would be a supportive tool for commissioners and providers in enabling them to establish safe and effective staffing capacity and capability.
10. Officials from NQB member organisations have contributed to these draft expectations, which are attached at **Annex A**.

Do NQB members support the approach to developing expectations in this area, as the basis of a 'How to' guide?

Do NQB members have any comments on the draft expectations?

Do they cover the right areas, at that right level of detail, and set out in the right tone?

11. There are a number of issues which the NQB and member organisations will need to work through in further developing these expectations and any guidance:

- ensuring that it is right to limit this work to nursing, midwifery and care staff, or whether this work should be framed in the context of getting clinical staffing right, with this piece of work being the first of a series of documents to support clinical staffing;
- how the guidance will be drawn upon by statutory organisations. The CQC have indicated that they could incorporate anything published into their regulatory activity. There are questions as to what Monitor and NHS TDA might do to incorporate anything published into how they discharge their responsibilities, and how / whether commissioners should use the commissioning cycle in this respect;
- how to ensure alignment with the workforce planning process recently established by Health Education England (HEE), and the timescales involved;
- the need and how best to engage a broad cross-section of providers in their development, to ensure they are relevant, realistic, and helpful;; and
- what guidance, tools and other resources should any guidance produced refer to. Should these be accredited in some way, and if so by whom?

Subject to the NQB being supportive of work to develop expectations and guidance in this area, NQB organisations will work together to resolve these issues.

At this stage, do NQB members have views on the issues identified?

Handling and publication

12. Subject to NQB members being content with the approach being taken to developing the expectations as the basis for more detailed guidance in this area, there is a need to consider the date of publication.

13. With cooperation from all NQB member organisations, the expectations could be refined and the full 'How to' guide developed by mid-November.

Publication of the document could be timed alongside or in advance of the Government's further response to the Francis Inquiry and the Berwick review.

Do members have views on the date of publication?

Summary

14. This paper provides NQB members with the background to work underway on developing expectations as the basis for more detailed guidance on nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability, and seeks their views on how best to progress this work.

The NQB is asked for their views on:

- the approach to developing expectations as the basis for more detailed guidance on nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability, the latest draft of which are set out in Annex A;

- a number of issues that need to be worked through in developing the expectations and guidance; and

- whether, and when NQB guidance on establishing safe nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability should be published.

**Jane Cummings, Chief Nursing Officer, NHS England
26 September 2013**

Annex A

[Draft expectations on nursing, midwifery and care staffing capacity and capability – superseded by guidance on ‘How to get the right staffing in the right place at the right time – nursing, midwifery and care staffing’ to be published in November 2013]

