



Royal College  
of Nurses

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## Executive summary

Nurses from overseas have always made a valuable contribution to the NHS and care settings in the UK. We also have a history of relying on the migration of nurses from overseas to compensate for the shortfall of nurses at home.

For the first time since the early 2000s it is becoming clear that there is a critical shortage of registered nurses in the UK. But both the UK and global nursing labour markets are changing and our increasing over-reliance on alternative sources is not sustainable.

Health care providers across the UK are continually sounding the alarm over their ability to recruit permanent nurses. As efforts are made to increase productivity in the NHS and bring down the agency bill over the next year, Trusts will be even more reliant on expensive recruitment drives both in and outside of Europe to recruit staff.

The RCN is increasingly worried that changes to the immigration rules will have a disproportionate impact on the retention and recruitment of nurses from outside Europe. Nurses will have to meet the £35,000 income threshold to remain in the UK; the salary of a senior nurse. This is a position that the majority of nurses would not reach within six years; the time allowed to nurses recruited from outside Europe under the immigration rules.

In this report we show that up to 3,365 nurses currently working in the UK may have to leave the country from 2017 as a direct result of the 2012 immigration changes. If levels of recruitment stay the same, by 2020, 6,620 nurses will be impacted. If the UK were to begin to significantly increase the reliance on nurses from outside Europe to only half of what it was in the early 2000s we could see nearly 30,000 nurses being impacted by the changes.

To recruit nurses from overseas incurs additional costs to the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN estimates that the NHS has spent over £20 million recruiting the 3,365 nurses already working in the UK who may have to return home because



## Retention

Another important aspect of the nursing shortage is the need to retain the staff currently working in the UK. Measures and incentives must be provided to help retain current staff. However, there are external factors which may hinder the retention of internationally recruited nurses in the UK.

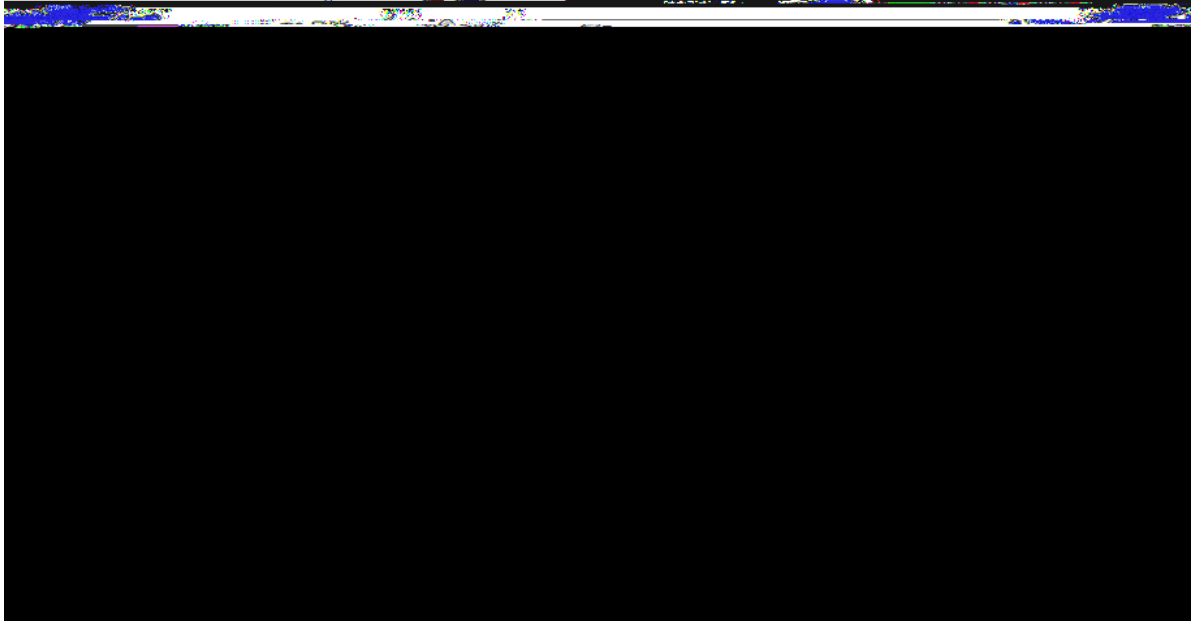
First, we know that nearly all employers currently

to have to leave the UK after 6 years. Without a significant increase in the supply of nurses from within the UK it is also likely that the NHS will have to continue spending money on recruiting nurses from outside the EEA to replace those it will begin losing from 2017.

### Future impact

Using the NMC data it is also possible to model the impact that the immigration changes will have on those in the UK workforce in 2020.

We have explored two scenarios, both based on the assumption that 90 (a)-3.6(t t)()



- 1) According to the World Bank, there was a shortage in India of 2.4 million nurses in 2012 and this trend is only likely to worsen.
- 2) In the Caribbean, the expectation is that by 2025 the region will face a shortage of 10,000 nurses thanks to migration to the US, the Middle East and other emerging regions.
- 3) Many economically emerging regions, such as the Middle East, are recruiting nurses from the West in order to meet their own shortfalls. In many cases, the terms and conditions offered to these professionals are much more lucrative, and so, in the future, the UK may have to

In light of these global trends the UK must be mindful that our own recruitment and workforce issues are not unique and UK employers are not operating in a vacuum. In the context of a worsening global shortage, nurses working in the UK are, and



# Notes

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