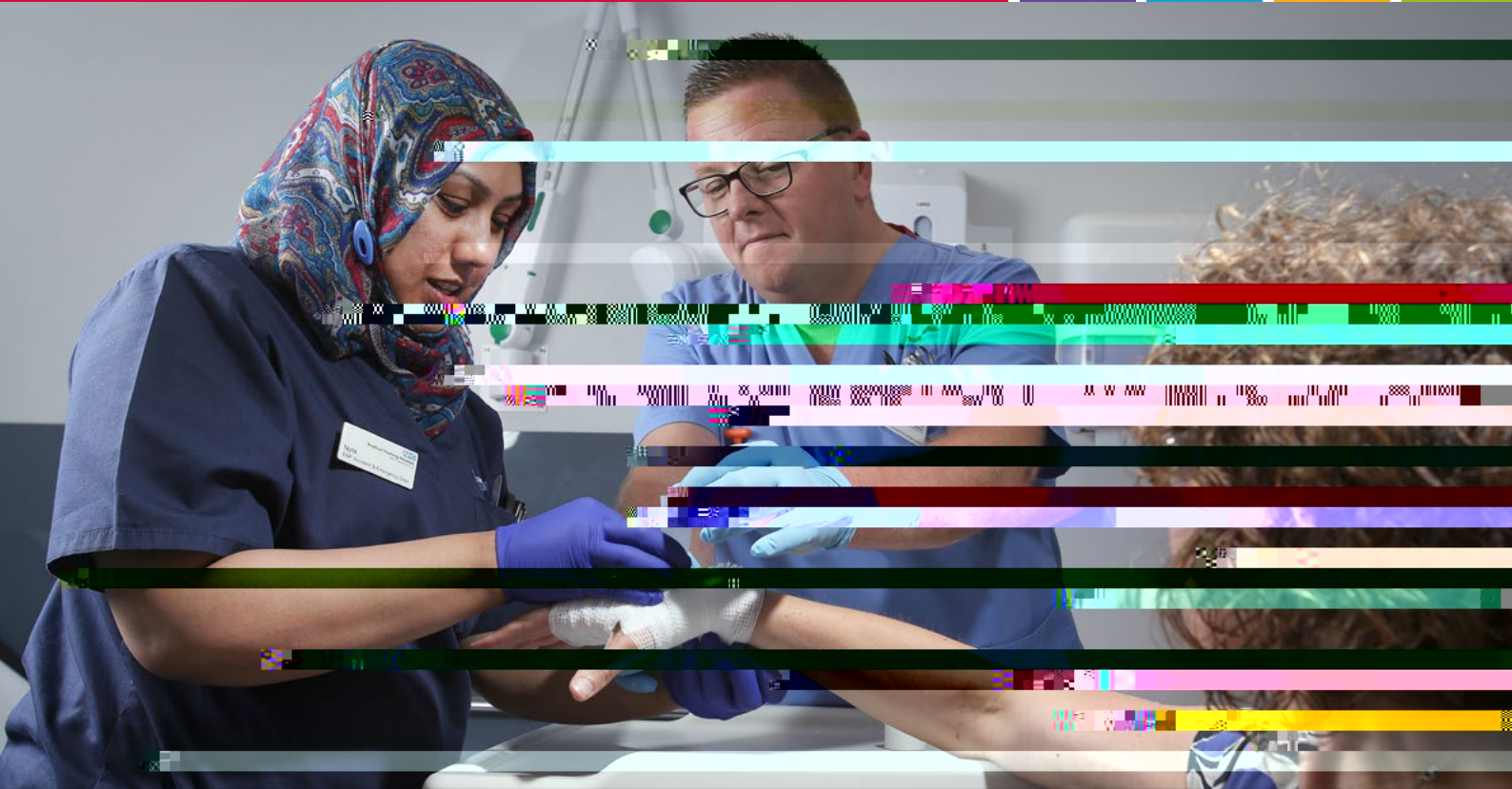




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The UK Nursing Labour Market Review 2020



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The RCN's annual *Labour Market Review* (LMR) examines the shape, size and state of the nursing labour market, analysing trends in the employment and training of nursing staff across the UK economy.

As in previous years, this review aims to piece together available data and intelligence from government data sources, from public sector and independent sector employers across the UK and other bodies including the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas). Improvements in data quality and accessibility are made every year allowing us to paint an increasingly comprehensive picture. However, differences in data collection and publication across the various parts of the health and social care system mean it is not possible to provide a fully comprehensive analysis of the whole workforce.

This report provides a review of the UK nursing labour market, looking at recent data and trends for nursing staff working in the health sector across the UK, drawing out differences and similarities across the four UK countries. The review uses national data sets to estimate the size, shape and composition of the nursing workforce. The review covers:

- an overview of the UK labour market
- the UK nursing workforce across the whole UK economy
- the nursing workforce in NHS England, Scotland, Wales and in Health and Social Care, Northern Ireland
- nursing earnings
- pre-registration education.

The *Labour Market Review* aims to estimate the size, shape and composition of the nursing workforce using Office of National Statistics datasets in addition to data collected by the four UK health departments. It should be noted that datasets often use different terminology, particularly around the definition of nurses and midwives and nursing support staff and data is sometimes collected across different time frames and that these differences have been identified where significant. For example, some data sets refer to registered and others to qualified nurses. Nursing support staff are referred to as nursing assistants and auxiliaries in UK official data from the Office of National Statistics, while other definitions are used by different health departments.

Section 3 starts by providing an analysis from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) to estimate both the number of nurses, midwives and nursing support workers working in the UK and where they work. It also provides estimates about the number of nursing staff born outside the UK.

3.1 Labour Force Survey data

This section provides an analysis of figures from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which provides official measures of employment in the UK. It gives an indication of the number of nurses, nursing assistants and auxiliaries and midwives working across the UK economy (as

3.1.2 Sector of work

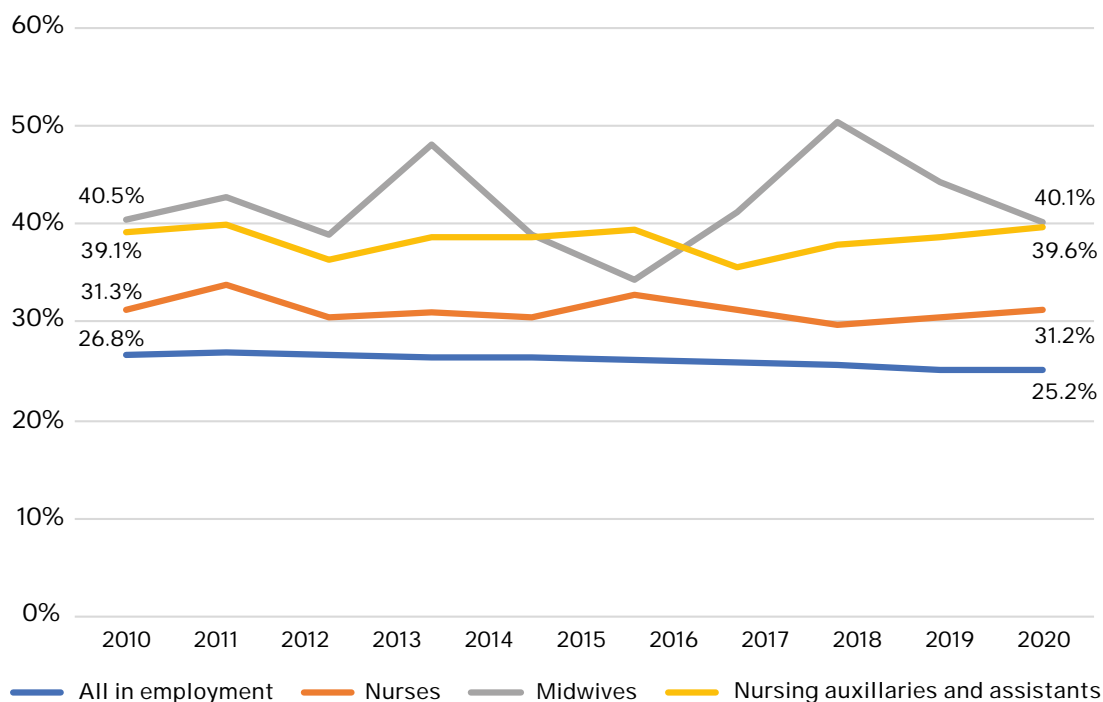
3.1.3 Part-time working

Figure 4 shows estimates of part-time working among the nursing workforce in employment (excluding self-employed) as compared to the whole UK working population.⁴

In 2010/11, almost a third (31.3%) of nurses reported working part-time, with the proportion barely shifting over the ten-year period to period to 2019/20. The proportion of midwives working part-time has fluctuated to a greater extent over this time, varying between 50.2% and 34.4%.

Among nursing auxiliaries and assistants, 39.1% reported working part-time in 2009/10, and 39.6% reported doing so in 2019/20.

The chart shows that part-time working is clearly more common in the nursing workforce than the UK workforce as a whole, with around a quarter of all UK employees reporting they worked part-time in 2018/19. This can be explained by the high proportion of women in the nursing workforce – while it is estimated that half of all those in employment in the UK are women, 82% of nursing assistants and auxiliaries and 87% of nurses are women.



Source: Analysis of the Annual Population Survey (2010/11-2019/20)

4. Full-time and part-time status is self-classified by respondents to the Labour Force Survey.

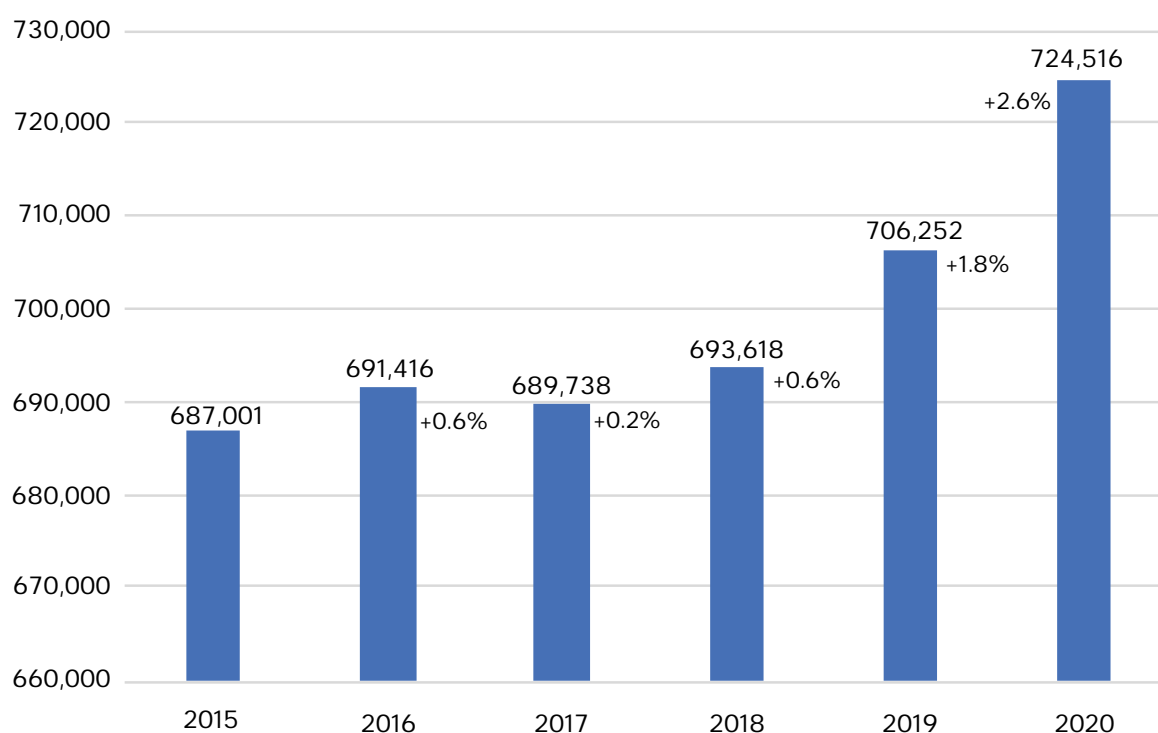
Figure 5 takes into account the high proportion of women employees in the health and social

This section provides data from the NMC Register to look at recent trends in the number of nurses and midwives registered in the UK. All nurses and midwives who practise in the UK must be on the register, however this does not necessarily mean they are working as a nurse or midwife.

4.1 Number of registrants

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) data shows that there were 724,516 nurses, midwives and nursing associates on the register as of September 2020, representing an increase of 18,264 (2.6%) since September 2019.⁵

It is also worth noting that at the time of reporting, there were 12,756 nurses and midwives on the COVID-19 temporary register, and between April and September, almost 2,000 people left the temporary register to join the permanent one.



Source: Nursing and Midwifery Council

5. www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-accounts/registration-statistics/

2016

4.2 NMC new entrants

Looking at new entrants to the NMC register, the overall number (including UK, EEA and non-EEA registrants) stood at 37,324 in 2020 – a rise of 9.0% from 2019.8.1 D.1 (1)h8.4 (f 9)2.9 (.)0.6 (0)-3

4.3 Numbers leaving the NMC register

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Section 5 looks at trends in the nursing workforce across the four UK countries between 2015 and 2020.⁶

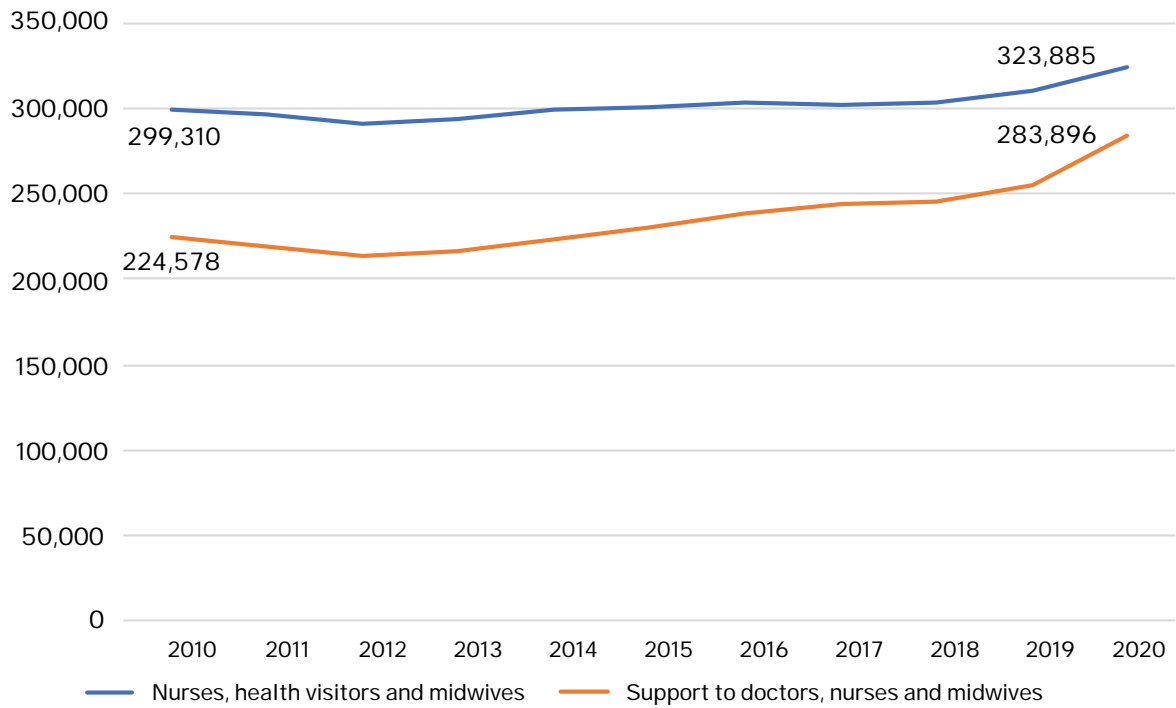
This section concentrates on the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland as the main employer of nursing staff. While services are often referred to as the NHS they are mostly independent from each other and operate under different management, rules, and political authority.

This section also attempts to draw on other data sources to build a picture of the wider workforce, for example in general practice and in adult social care where possible. The extent to which data is collected and published varies across each UK country. Moreover, differences in the ways health and social care are structured and provided across all countries mean that comparisons cannot easily be drawn. All efforts have been made to ensure consistency between measures but there are variations in definitions and methods of data collection between the different countries. A/tion beltfeed ac

5.1 Comparison of workforce data across the UK

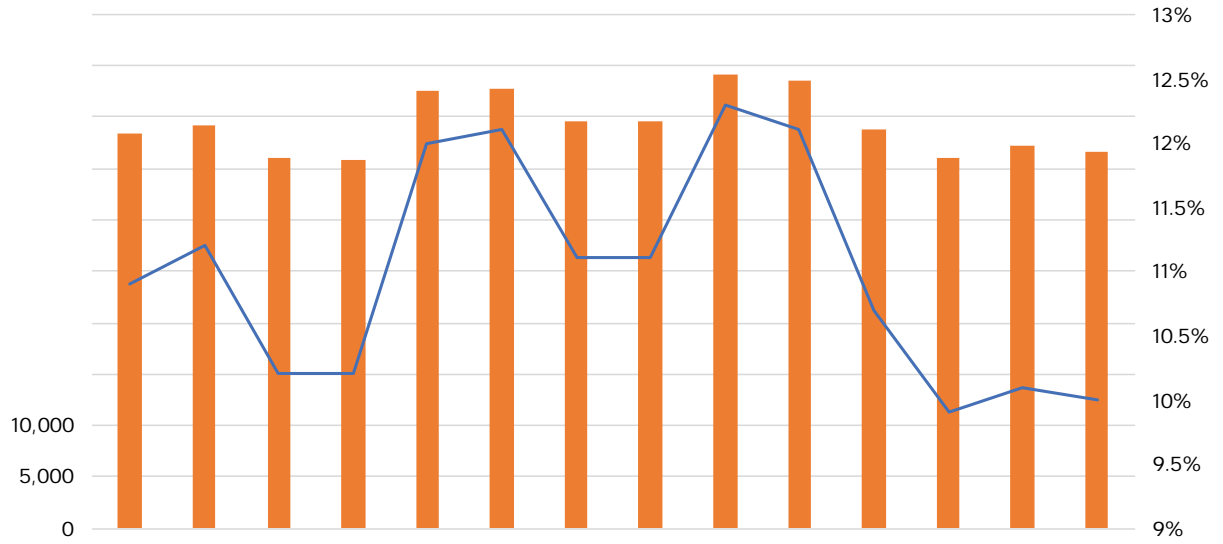
Tables 3 to 5 track trends in workforce numbers between 2015 and 2020 across the UK. Over the last five years, there has been overall growth in the whole NHS workforce in all countries, with the strongest growth seen in England and Wales. In the nursing workforce, the nursing supprall growth ipthuwotpt9p(3t((r)6.)-8.9 (t)15.2 (h i)8.6 (n t))26(w)y whoeiirs, e

5.2 NHS England nursing workforce

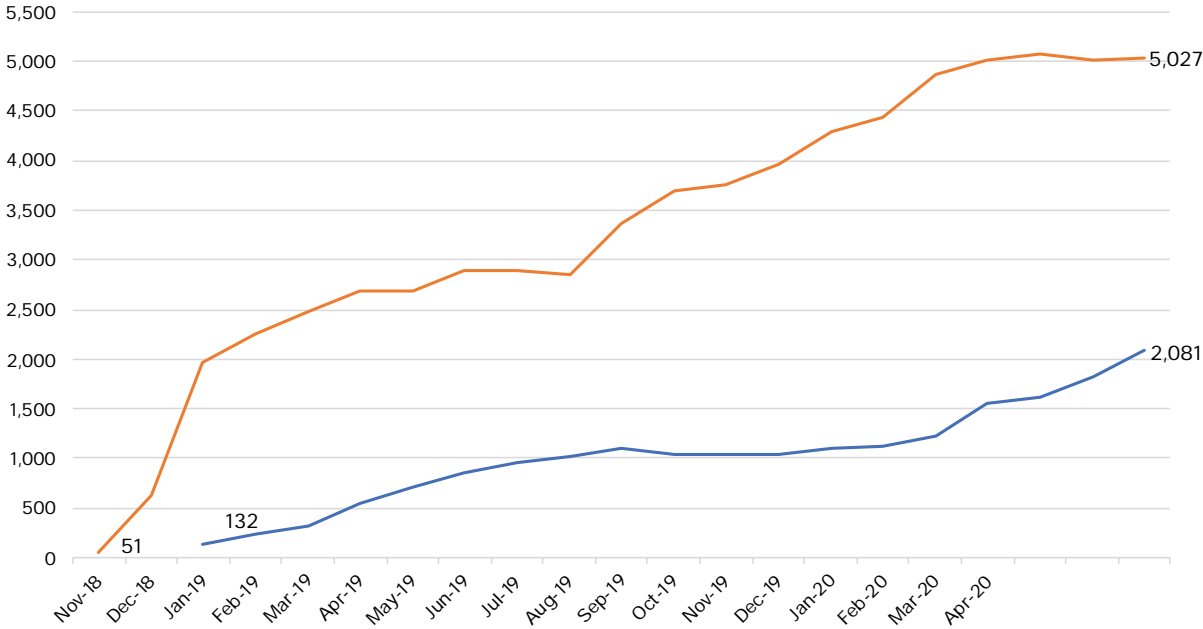


Source: NHS Digital

Figure 15 looks in more detail at community nursing, concentrating on the number of health visitors and district nurses. This shows that while the FTE number of health visitors and district nurses started at similar levels in 2010, the number of district nurses has fallen by 41.6%, while the number of health visitors grew by 28.3% between 2010 and 2015, peaking at almost 10,000. However, since then, the number has fallen even below 2010 levels to 6,644.

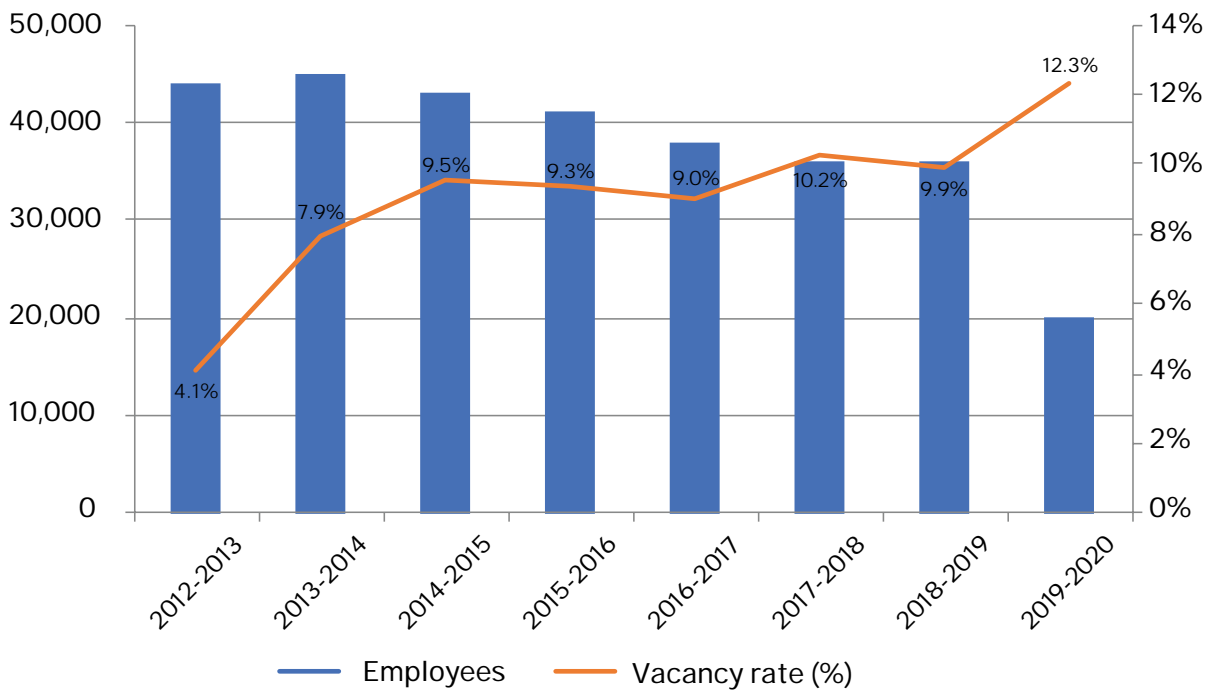


Source: NHS Digital



Among the registered nursing workforce, there were an estimated 36,000 registered nurse jobs, representing a fall of 29.4% since 2012/13 from 51,000. Skills for Care explain that this fall ‘could be related to recruitment and retention issues, but also may be a result of some organisations creating nursing assistant roles to take on some tasks previously carried out by nurses.’¹³

However, figure 18 also shows that the registered nurse vacancy rate across this period, has risen from 4.1% in 2012/13 to 12.3% in 2019/20 highlighting the severe recruitment and retention problems faced by the sector.



Source: Skills for Care

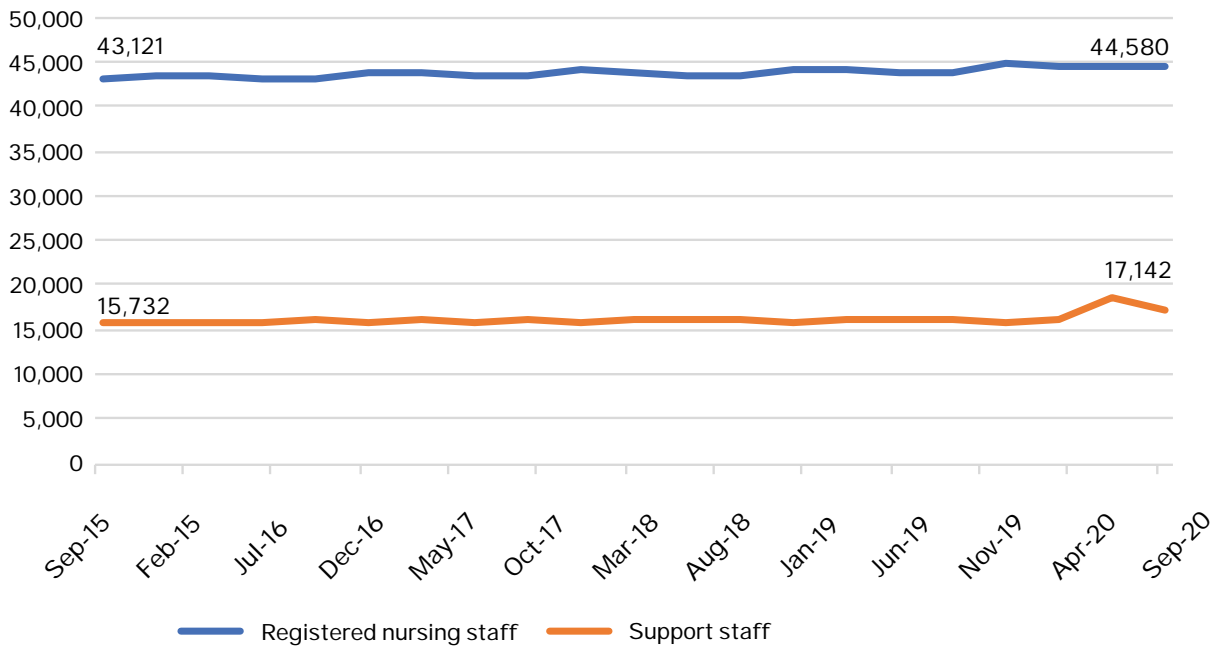
Table 7 provides data on the nursing workforce directly employed by independent sector health care providers (in 2018/19) who are providing NHS (or NHS equivalent) services.

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Number of organisations	41	43	52	52	59
Nurses, health visitors and midwives	11,156	11,404	12,276	11,854	13,032
Average per organisation	294	238	239	228	221

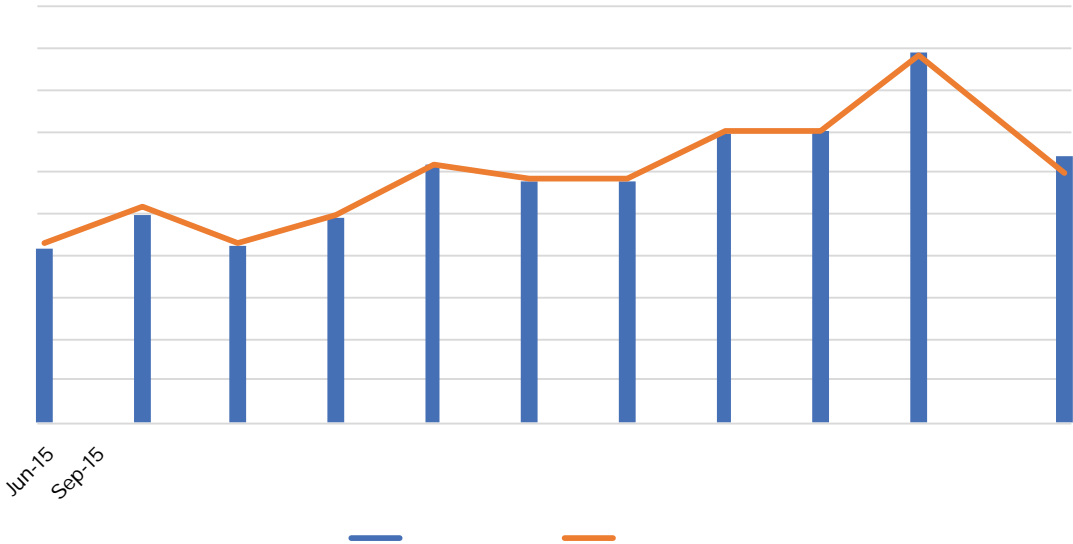
5.3 Scotland

Figure 19 shows the NHS nursing workforce trend between 2010 and 2020, showing the latest available data at the time of publication. There were 44,580 (FTE) in the registered nursing and midwifery workforce as at September 2020 and 17,142 (FTE) in the nursing support workforce. The figures for the nursing support workforce for June and September include nursing students on Band 3 and 4 paid placements as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response.



Source: NHS Education for Scotland

Table 9 provides a breakdown in by selected work areas for registered nursing and midwifery staff (full-time equivalent). Between September 2015 and September 2020 there has been a small increase in registered adult nursing numbers (1.0%), and a larger increase in both the health visiting (18.6%) and district nursing workforces (2.7%). However there has been a downward trend in learning disability nursing, mental health nursing and paediatric nursing.



Source: NHS Education for Scotland

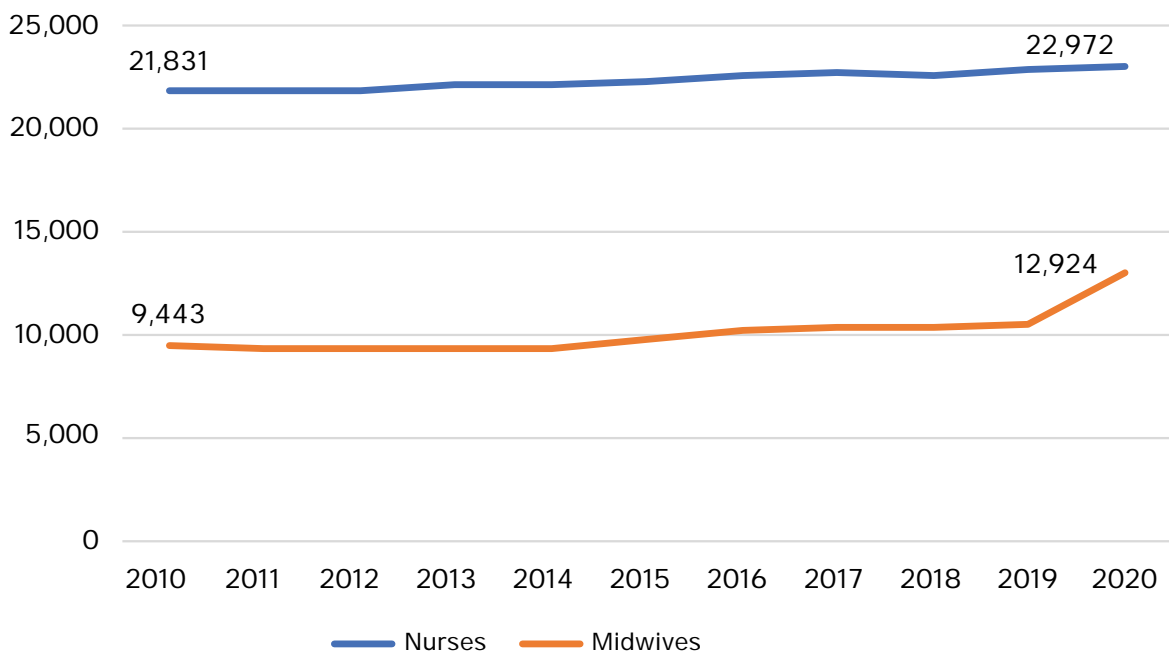
Source: Scottish Social Services Workforce Data

Source: Scottish Social Services Workforce Data

5.4 Wales

Figure 20 shows that that number of registered nursing and midwifery staff has grown by 5.2% from 21,831 (FTE) in 2010 to 22,924 in 2020. The nursing support workforce has grown from 9,443 (FTE) to 12,972 (36.9%).¹⁶

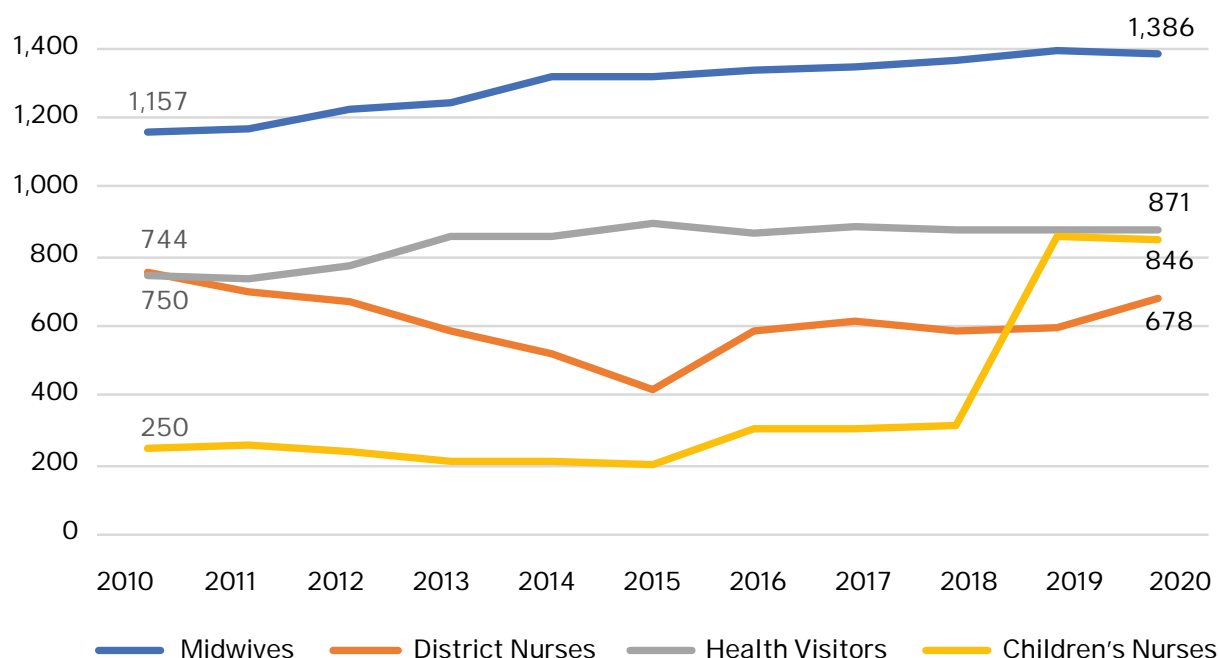
The registered nursing and midwifery workforce has grown by just 1% in the last year while the nursing support workforce has grown by 22.5%. In common with other UK countries, this largely reflects the number of students on paid clinical placements.



Source: StatsWales, Welsh Government

Figure 23 shows the trend in specific specialisms between 2010 and 2020 and shows that the number of midwives (FTE) has increased by 19.7% and the number of health visitors has increased by 17.1%. By contrast, the number of district nurses has decreased by 9.6%. The long-term trend is over a threefold increase in the number of children’s nurses, but the greatest increase seen between 2018 and 2019.

16. September figures up to 2019; then June 2020 figures



Source: StatsWales, Welsh Government

Table 13 shows the nursing workforce employed in general practice, which makes up approximately 25% of the total non-GP workforce of 7,617 across 404 practices.¹⁷

Practice nurse	898
Advanced Nurse Practitioner	246
Extended Role Practice Nurse	156
Nurse Specialist	37
Trainee Nurse	3
Health care assistant/Apprentice	544

The latest available data for 2018 show that among the 1,300 individual, external care providers commissioned by local authorities in Wales, they employed an estimated 53,000 people. Of these 1,545 (3.5%) are registered nurses, a further 65.5% are care workers, care officers and care assistants and 9.1% are senior care workers.¹⁸ In addition, among local authority regulated services ie services that deliver social care in Wales, are owned and/or managed by Welsh local authorities, there is an estimated workforce of 11,900, of which 62.3% are care workers, care officers and care assistants and 4.8% are senior care workers. Less than 1% of this workforce are registered nurses.

17. <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-04/general-practice-workforce-29-february-2020-925.pdf>

18. <https://socialcare.wales/research-and-data/workforce-reports>

Acute/general	7,533	8,062	8,327	10.5%	3.3%
Mental health	1,633	1,597	1,589	-2.7%	-0.5%
Midwifery	990	1,082	1,093	10.4%	1.0%
District nursing	908	861	884	-2.6%	2.7%
Paediatric	631	793	810	28.4%	2.1%
Health visiting	445	527	511	14.8%	-3.0%
Learning disability	437	340	326	-25.4%	-4.1%

Source: Department of Health Northern Ireland HSC Workforce Census

Figure 25 shows the vacancy rate between June 2017 and September 2020. The rate among registered nurses and midwives climbed steadily to a peak of 13.1% in June 2019, and has fallen since then. The vacancy rate in September 2020 stood at 7.4%

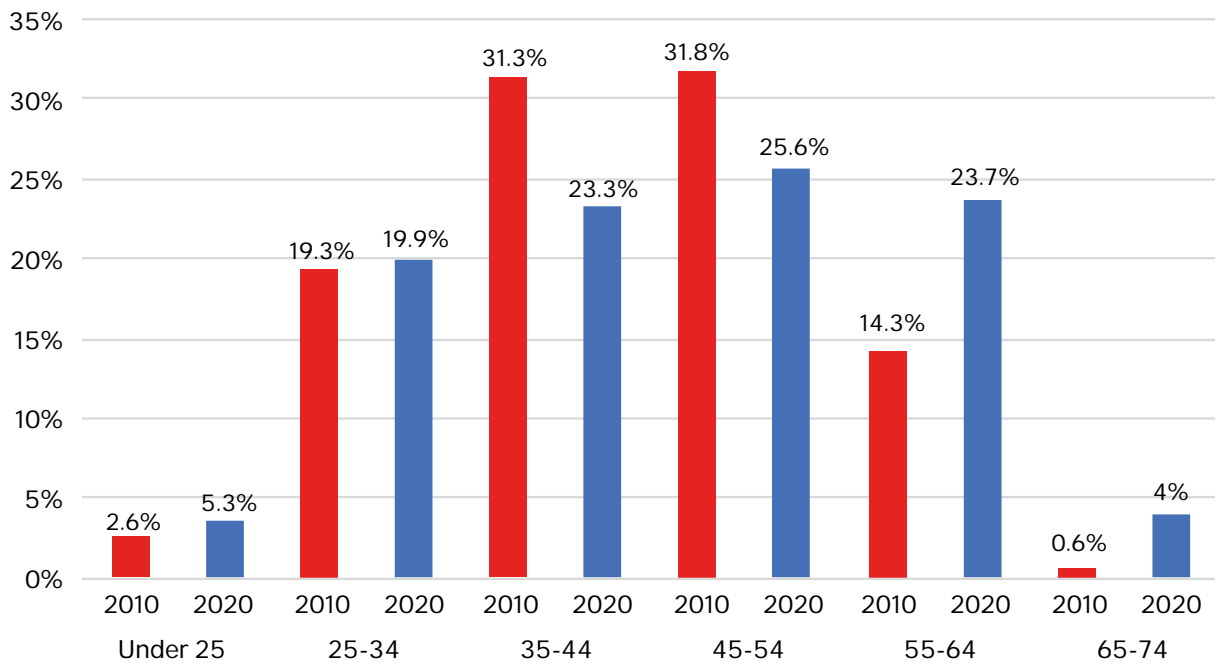
Among the nursing support workforce, the vacancy rate showed a similar trend, rising steadily between 2017 and 2019, peaking at 9.8% in December 2019 before quickly falling to reach 4% in June 2020. Between June and September 2020, the rate rose slightly to 5.2%.

Source: Department of Health Northern Ireland HSC Workforce Census

The following figures provide estimates of the age profile of registered nursing staff using available data from the Labour Force Survey, NHS England, Scotland and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland. Data are not available for NHS staff in Wales.

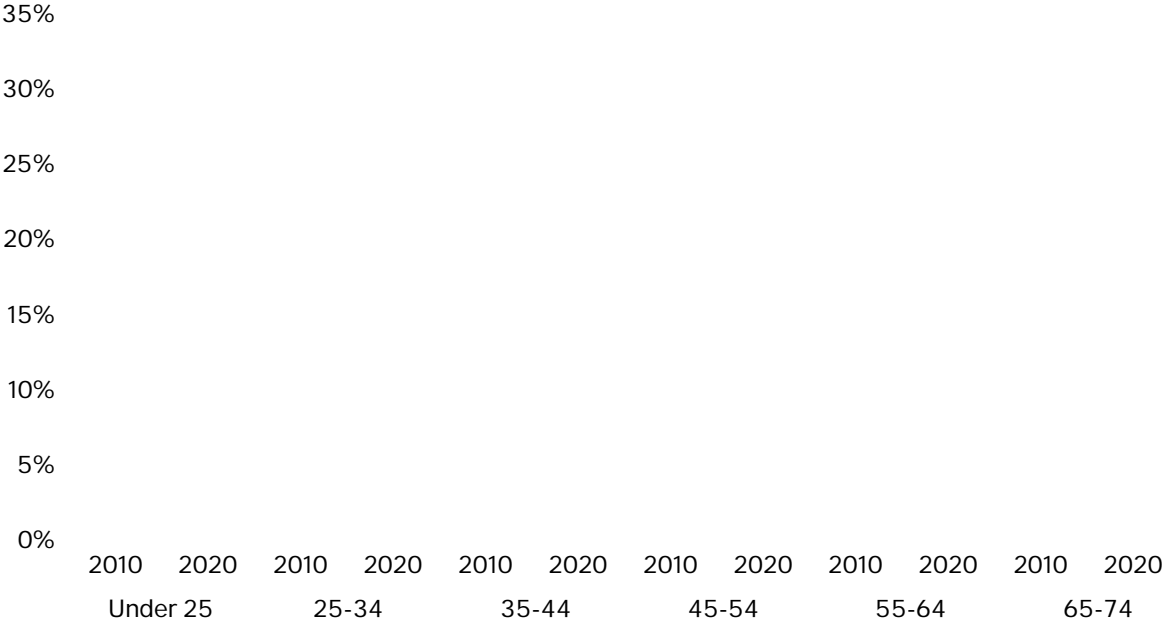
These figures confirm how the profile of the nursing workforce is progressively ageing. Comparisons of data from over the last decade highlight how older workers form a growing component of the workforce across the UK.

Analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that 14.9% of the nursing workforce across all sectors was aged 55 or over in 2010, compared to 27.7% in 2020.



Source: Labour Force Survey April to June 2010 and April to June 2020

Figure 27 shows the latest available data for the age profile among the NHS registered nursing workforce in England. Just over one in ten (11.6%) were aged 55 or over in 2010, compared to 17.3% in 2020.



Section 5 looks at average earnings growth for nursing staff compared to other employees in the UK, using Office for National Statistics data.

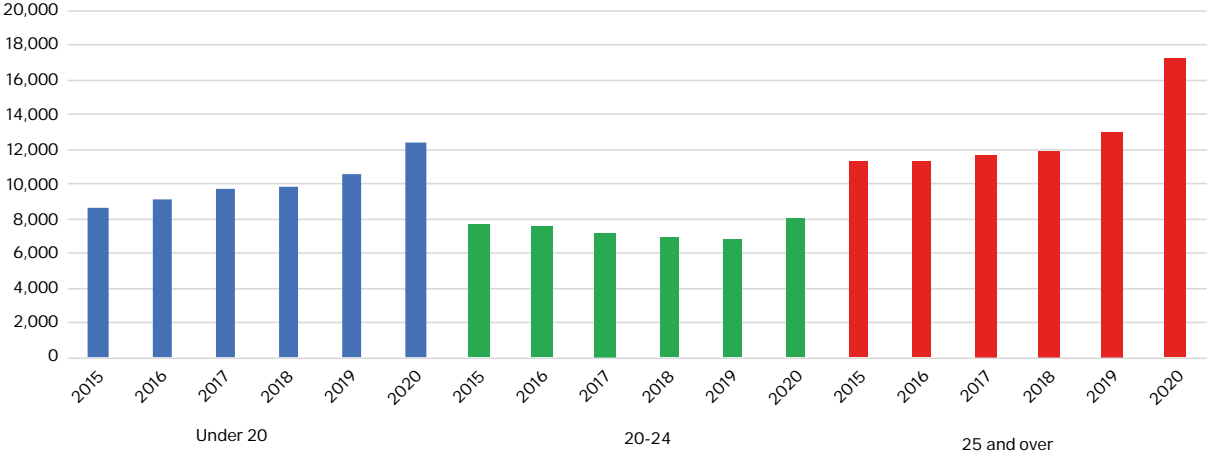
Figure 31 shows the growth in full-time gross weekly earnings for all UK nursing staff and all UK employees between 2010 and 2020. Since 2010, nominal weekly earnings rose by 16.2% for nurses and 21.6% for nursing auxiliaries and assistants, compared to 17.5% for all full-time employees.

Between 2010 and 2020, earnings have fallen behind inflation as measured by both RPI and CPI, with the only real growth seen among nursing assistants and auxiliaries in the last year, where earnings have grown by 2.1% between 2019 and 2020.

In real terms, using RPI as the measure of inflation, gross weekly earnings have fallen by 11.5% for nurses working full-time and by 7.4% among nursing assistants and auxiliaries between 2010 and 2020. For all full-time employees, earnings have fallen by 10.6%.

In 2020, median weekly full-time earnings for nurses are estimated to be £690 and £430 for nursing auxiliaries and assistants (across all sectors).

In the NHS, pay has been subject to a policy of public sector pay constraint since 2012, set out in the following timeline:



Source: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

