

NHS Long Term Workforce Plan

Brief guide from NHS England – June 2023



The NHS is nothing without our people, the NHS Long Term Workforce plan is a once in a generation opportunity to put the NHS on a sustainable footing to deliver high quality patient care now and in the long term. This briefing sets out what the plan means for you and your teams.

The Plan sets out an expansion in training, changes to ways of working, and improvements to culture that will increase the NHS permanent workforce over 15 years, this could mean at least an extra

- 60,000 doctors,
- 170,000 nurses
- 71,000 allied health professional (AHPs)

The plan also sets out that there will be an expansion in the number of new roles such as physician associates and nursing associates. We will also increase the number and proportion of apprenticeships, creating opportunities for people to join the NHS from a range of different backgrounds and with a wealth of different experiences.

This plan sets out supply and demand scenarios and a range of projections for key workforce groups and professions over the short, medium and long term which will be repeated regularly as part of the NHS planning round.

The case for change




There were over 112,000 vacancies across the NHS in March 2023: an 8.0% vacancy rate. Levels of staffing in the NHS are proportionally lower than other comparable health systems internationally. An ageing population, growing demand, and the opportunity presented by technology, mean that work in healthcare will be dramatically different in future.

We need to take steps now to meet these challenges. Without immediate action we expect the workforce shortfall will grow to **between 260,000–360,000 FTEs by 2036/37**, even with ambitious productivity assumptions, this shortfall would include:

- 15,000 GPs
- 37,000 community nurses
- 17,000 mental health and learning disability nurses






While the above looks stark and we cannot deny there are challenges ahead, there are also significant opportunities. This Plan sets out a series of actions, reforms and proposals to demonstrate how the expected shortfall could be closed.

Headline Proposals:

	<p>Train: Growing the workforce We will train over 450,000 healthcare professionals over the next five years. This means that by 2028:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical training places will grow by 33% to 10k a year • Nurse training places will grow by 34% to 40k a year • AHP training places will grow by 13% to 17k a year • Training places for new roles such as nursing associates, advanced care practitioners, anaesthesia associates, peer support workers and others will grow by more than 30% to nearly 16k a year • Pharmacy training places will grow by 29% to 4,300 a year • Grown the number of support to clinical workers by more than 110,000 • The number of GP training places will grow by 25% to 5k a year <p>NHS recruitment processes will be reformed to support this growth and ensure NHS organisations support their local job market.</p>
	<p>Retain: existing talent Retention improvements can contribute to retaining up to 130,000 more staff in the NHS. To make this a reality, the NHS will need to continue to improve culture, inclusion and ways of working and make the NHS People Promise a reality for everyone. This includes better opportunities for career development, improved flexible working options, alongside government reforms to the pension scheme</p>
	<p>Reform: Working and training differently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will take full advantage of digital and technological innovations, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), speech recognition, robotic process automation (RPA) and remote monitoring, to provide a more efficient service for staff and patients. • To ensure patients benefit from a broader range of skilled professionals, we will increase the proportion of new roles from 1% of the workforce in 2022 to 5% by 2036/37. • We will expand clinical apprenticeships from 7% of training places today to 22% by 2030. • We will work with universities to improve student experience, reducing leaver rates from courses, and using new technology to prepare people for work in a modern NHS.

What will be different for our NHS Staff?

Change needs to be clear, tangible, and meaningful for our staff, the plan commits the NHS to:

	<p>Support our staff to enjoy more flexible careers – working in ways that suit them and having flexibility to progress in to new roles.</p>
	<p>Overhaul our NHS recruitment processes, including by ensuring it takes no longer than six weeks from the placement of a job advert to the completion of a candidate's pre-employment checks</p>
	<p>Put staff sharing agreements in place to make it as easy as possible to work across organisational boundaries</p>
	<p>Deliver on the commitments in the NHS People Promise with a clear employee value proposition, ensuring we can attract and retain talent, and deliver the actions in the NHS equality, diversity and inclusion plan</p>
	<p>Reduce our reliance on agency staff by making staff banks the most attractive route to help fill short-term gaps</p>

If implemented in full, this would mean:

- Leaver rates improve around 15% over the course of the Plan, and retention will be at rates better than the average pre-pandemic.
- A higher proportion of new joiners to the NHS workforce would come from training and education routes rather than from overseas, and within those, a greater proportion would train via apprenticeship routes.
- By 2028 there will be 34% more nurses trained per year in England and medical school places would increase by a third.
- By 2031, the number of apprentices will represent 22% of all people in clinical training across the NHS.
- There will be a significant increase in the number of trainers and educators working across the NHS, to support growth in training places.
- Materially reducing staff shortfalls by 2028 and further reduce to minimal levels thereafter.

Top lines

- We know the NHS is nothing without its workforce and this plan will deliver the biggest increase in training numbers in our 75-year history.
- This is the first time that the government has asked the NHS to come up with a comprehensive workforce plan and it is a once in a generation opportunity to put staffing on a sustainable footing.
- We are going to train record numbers of doctors, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists and other key healthcare staff to address the gaps we have in the current workforce and meet the challenge of a growing and ageing population.
- Since the founding of the NHS 75 years ago, we have relied on the amazing skill and dedication of staff who came here from around the world, starting with Windrush and there will always be a place for them in the NHS.
- But demand for the skills and dedication of healthcare workers is only going to grow in every country around the world so we need to end the overreliance on recruitment from overseas.
- We also want to draw on the widest possible pool of talent. Which is why we are increasing alternative routes into NHS careers with more people able to get a nursing or medical degree through an apprenticeship.
- By addressing workforce gaps, we can tackle the covid backlogs that have inevitably built up over the pandemic, not just helping patients but also boosting the economy by helping get people back to work.
- This plan isn't just about increasing numbers, it is about working differently to maximise the benefit of new tech, therapies and treatment.
- It is also about retaining the staff we have – by boosting flexibility in roles and supporting the wellbeing of our staff, we can ensure fewer staff leave the NHS over the next 15 years.
- NHS England intends to publish further iterations of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan at least every two years, to reflect the progress that has been made in delivering the actions set out here, and to take account of changes to the way services and care may be delivered in future.