



THE NHS WORKFORCE

Improving health and social care is a political priority in the United Kingdom. Boosting the number of health care workers and making better use of their skills are central objectives of the Government's plans for reform. However, recruitment and retention are major challenges for the NHS, particularly in inner cities, and especially in London.

LEAD CONTACT

Pippa Gough
P.Gough@kingsfund.org.uk

What can we offer?

The NHS employs more staff than any other organisation in the UK, and the health care workforce plays a key role in improving services. The King's Fund is uniquely placed to provide an independent perspective on workforce policy and planning, free from professional or political interests, and to act as a catalyst for development and change.

What are the key issues?

There are recruitment and retention challenges across the NHS. In some cities, for example, London, these are particularly pronounced. The challenge for workforce planners, policy makers and managers is to respond to staff shortages, changes in population and patterns of demand, and modernise ways of working. All of this must be done in a demanding policy environment, including recent government initiatives such as proposals for foundation trusts and for reforming pay and rewards (Agenda for Change). To be effective, they need a clear understanding of the factors shaping and influencing the workforce, including:

The dynamics of London's health care labour market Staff shortages are more pronounced in the capital than in other parts of the UK; turnover and vacancy rates are higher; and there is greater reliance on international and agency staff. The NHS in London must expand and improve services for a population set to grow by 700,000 by 2016, meet the needs of many diverse communities, and tackle major health inequalities between them. There is an urgent need to develop creative new approaches that work with the distinctive dynamics of London's health care labour market – rather than cutting across them.

Changing professional models Nationally, the need to bridge the gap between staff shortages and rising patient expectations is driving significant change in who is providing care, and how. New roles and ways of working are being developed for existing staff and teams. Professional roles are being negotiated and redefined, and career pathways remodelled through, for example, the 'skills escalator' concept, allowing for new progression routes and access to training throughout a career.

Building capacity Boosting workforce capacity must go much further than tackling gaps between supply and demand. It means developing new kinds of health leadership in the NHS and local communities; supporting innovative HR policies in areas such as early retirement and temporary staff; and encouraging recruitment from, for example, local communities or groups such as refugees.

A changing context The healthcare workforce must respond to new policies, priorities, and ways of working, alongside changing patient expectations and greater patient choice. For example, how will it develop the structures, skills and approaches needed to cope with a growing demand for chronic disease management, across a range of providers? How can health and social care providers build new partnerships that deliver more integrated care?

In Capital Health?

This policy paper, published with support from London's workforce development confederations and network of NHS HR managers (SHRINE), argues that top-down solutions and national HR initiatives may not always work in London's distinctive health care labour market. The capital needs to:

- develop timely, tactical responses to local opportunities and constraints
- build stronger networks, information and systems for action
- share innovative best practice in attracting and keeping NHS staff
- exploit the appeal of London as a place to train, work and live.

Adapted from: *In Capital Health? Creative Solutions to London's NHS workforce challenges* by James Buchan, Belinda Finlayson and Pippa Gough. King's Fund, July 2003. Download a summary at www.kingsfund.org.uk/summaries





What are we doing?

Research projects

CONTACT Renu Jobanputra
R.Jobanputra@kingsfund.org.uk

The impact of government policies on the NHS workforce This strand of work analyses the impact of recent government policy initiatives on London's health care workforce, focusing on the introduction of foundation trusts and the implementation of Agenda for Change. **ONGOING**

CONTACT Steve Dewar
S.Dewar@kingsfund.org.uk

The new professionalism Strong professional commitment will be crucial to health care reform and improving the patient experience. We are researching how the professional values on which the NHS was built are changing, as new concepts of rights and obligations emerge. **DISCUSSION PAPER MAY 2004**

CONTACT Renu Jobanputra
R.Jobanputra@kingsfund.org.uk

International recruitment We will deepen our analysis of the role of international recruitment in London's NHS, identifying a cohort of nurses and studying patterns over time, such as duration of stay, numbers returning home and impacts on health care capacity of countries of origin. **INTERIM REPORT JUN 2004**

CONTACT Janice Robinson
J.Robinson@kingsfund.org.uk

London's care services In spring 2004, we launch a major investigation into how local authorities and health and housing professionals are managing care services for vulnerable older people in the face of serious shortages in London. **FINAL REPORT SPRING 2005**

Development activities

London partnerships To gather intelligence on workforce issues and test solutions, we are in regular contact with key stakeholders in London, including human resource managers, health professionals, the workforce development confederations, the Department of Health, strategic health authorities, the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency, representatives from across the public sector, the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services.

CONTACT Sandra Meadows
S.Meadows@kingsfund.org.uk

Older staff We are discussing with partners ways of piloting recommendations from *Great to be Grey* (see below), such as targeted recruitment strategies and flexible working, in selected sites.

CONTACT Anna Coote
A.Coote@kingsfund.org.uk

Employment for health We are supporting the London Health Commission, a cross-cutting strategic body set up to monitor key indicators and drive health improvements in London, in a new initiative to promote employment across London as a health measure, working with numerous partners, including the NHS in London, the London Development Agency and London First.

CONTACT Pippa Gough
P.Gough@kingsfund.org.uk

Health advocacy We will continue our work to support local health advocates in some of London's most deprived areas to act as a bridge between health care professionals and local communities' needs, through research and policy development, and through a new King's Fund programme for community leaders.

CONTACT David Knowles
D.Knowles@kingsfund.org.uk

Health care leadership We run a wide range of courses to help managers and clinicians develop their leadership skills, supporting specific groups such as refugee doctors.

Event

CONTACT Pippa Gough
P.Gough@kingsfund.org.uk

Improving Working Lives: Staff views driving change King's Fund/Shrine/NHS Confederation joint conference. **LOCATION: KING'S FUND. DATE: 27 JAN 2004**

Useful resources

- Buchan J, Finlayson B, Gough P (2003). *In Capital Health? Creative solutions to London's NHS workforce challenges*. London: King's Fund.
- Coote A ed. (2003). *Claiming the Health Dividend: Unlocking the benefits of NHS spending*. London: King's Fund.
- Finlayson B, Dixon J et al (2002). 'Mind the gap: the policy response to the NHS nursing shortage'. *BMJ* vol 325, pp 541-44.
- Genkeer L, Gough P, Finlayson B (2003). *London's Mental Health Workforce: A review of recent developments*. London: King's Fund.
- Henwood M (2001). *Future Imperfect? Report of the King's Fund care and support inquiry*. London: King's Fund.
- Jobanputra R, Buchan J (2003). 'Power sharing'. *HJ* vol 113(5853), pp 26-7.
- Levenson R, Edmans T (2001). *Working for Health: The NHS as an employer and its role in regeneration*. London: King's Fund.
- Meadows S, Levenson R, Baeza J (2002). *The Last Straw: Explaining the NHS nursing shortage*. London: King's Fund.
- Meadows S (2002). *Great to be Grey: How can the NHS recruit and retain more older staff?* London: King's Fund.

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