

**NORTHUMBERLAND, TYNE AND WEAR NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING**

**Meeting Date:** 23 March 2016

**Title and Author of Paper:** Safer Staffing – Six Month Skill Mix Review  
Anne Moore, Group Nurse Director, Specialist Care Group and Vida Morris Group  
Nurse Director, Inpatient Care Group

**Paper for Debate, Decision or Information:** Information

**Key Points to Note:**

Since the last Board report during the last 6 months October 2015 to March 2016, workforce plans and skill mix have continued to be reviewed and scrutinised by service line taking into account demographic profiles, investment, service developments and transformation and most importantly changes in clinical need.

**Budget implications:** n/a

**Equal Opportunities and Legal and Other Implications:** n/a

**Action Proposed and Person Responsible for Action:** n/a

**Outcome required:**

To inform and assure the Trust Board that both Specialist and Inpatient Care Groups are ensuring robust and effective management of nursing workforce plans, risk, quality and safety to ensure 'Safe Staffing' in all clinical services. This is in line with National Safer Staffing requirements

## Six-Month Skill Mix Review

Specialist Care Group and Inpatient Care Group

Reporting Period: October 2015 – March 2016

Shining a light on the future



## **1. Introduction**

This report describes the activity undertaken across Specialist and Inpatient Care Groups to review workforce plans and assess skill mix against Safe Staffing indicators and National Safer Staffing requirements. It also provides an important update on work in progress to ensure NTW has the right staff with the right skills at the right time to deliver services from a recruitment and retention perspective.

## **2. Workforce Planning/Safer Staffing**

Following the stocktake submission on safer staffing to the Trust Board 12 months ago, a significant amount of work has continued to be undertaken within Specialist and Inpatient Care Groups with each Service Line.

Together with Ward Managers, Clinical Nurse Managers and Directorates the Groups have been able to analyse historical and current activity in line with establishments to ensure workforce plans are clear going forward.

It is recognised that we have an aging workforce and acknowledge the potential impact of staff choosing to retire from our service. The Trust is actively implementing the Trust Retire and Return guidance. This will assist in maintaining an important balance between newly qualified and experienced staff.

Establishments have been agreed for each service based upon clinical activity, previous use of bank and agency, transformation plans and a requirement to increase qualified nursing cover in some areas.

Despite a now established regular recruitment process for Nursing across the Trust there remain a number of new vacancies as well as fluctuating levels of agency use. The development of new commissioned posts in Community, at higher pay bands is attracting applications from ward based staff.

Extra investment by NTW into baseline establishments as well as in-year investment from commissioners for large numbers of posts aligned to new services following Vanguard decisions, especially in Community Liaison and EIP, has resulted in opportunities for staff, but has also increased movement and vacancies across the three care groups. These are being managed safely through planned staff moves and additional recruitment rounds.

The Safer Staffing reports continue to be reviewed on a monthly basis at the relevant Q&P sub-groups, and Workforce sub groups at Care Group level ensure that service line scrutiny on patient referrals, pathway changes, staffing levels, predicted growth, supply from Universities and other sectors, as well as potential commissioner decisions i.e. CQUINs and Commissioning intentions are informing staffing decisions.

### **3. Values Based Central Recruitment**

In the last six months the Trust has undertaken a further three recruitment campaigns, including one bespoke campaign for Community Liaison and EIP vacancies, as a significant number of vacancies resulted from new investment from Commissioners. Generic Registered and Unregistered staff campaigns have resulted in 199 (including call Band 3 Call Handlers) vacancies being filled Campaign 12, which is for qualified staff, went live on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The Executive Director of Nursing and Operations has personally written to all Student Nurses that are due to qualify in September 2016 informing them of the open day event, which took place on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016, as well as informing them of our vacancies for Registered Nurses. Other campaigns have included administration staff and successfully recruited to all vacancies in operational services with a waiting list for other vacancies as they arise

Following Campaigns 10 and 11 the Trust has been able to inflate the Flexi Pool arrangements for ward vacancies, but also where packages of care require additional staff on a short term basis due to increased patient acuity. There has been a gradual reduction in agency use and it is expected that the additional staff who are appointed from the campaigns in February and March will have an impact during the next quarter.

Central Recruitment is both influenced and informed by the views of service users and carers who value this ability to influence staff recruitment approaches. Fiona Grant supports us within our recruitment. Service user views are tested at each campaign in relation to questions and observation and assessment tools. This is done via the established Service User and Carer groups

Since the last report, Specialist Care Group offered 179 posts across all nursing grades Bands 2 to 6 and the Inpatient Care Group offered 30 across all nursing grades Bands 2 to 6. .

Whilst some of the staff moves will be within group and across groups in terms of promotions and new developments we continue to bring into the trust a significant number of external candidates in addition

### **4. Skill Mix**

There is an ongoing need for increased staffing due to levels of patient acuity. The main 'hotspot' areas for recruitment include Learning Disability and Neurological Services at Walkergate Park We recognise that there is a recruitment issue nationally due to a shortage of Learning Disability nurses and this is likely to continue to be an issue as fewer people are training to become nurses within this speciality. This matter has been raised with Health Education North East to help to influence and inform their commissioning plans for 2016/2017 and beyond.

In terms of Walkergate Park, we are currently 'piloting' a rolling advert for Registered Nurses Adult. To date the interest in posts within this service is very encouraging and there are 10 applications to date.

Children and Young Peoples Inpatients have also been the focus of targeted recruitment due to the increased observation requirements and complexity of patients and within the Trust we are pursuing creative approaches to addressing staffing shortfalls with the other Care Groups. There has been a positive outcome in response to the bespoke advert for Unqualified Staff particularly within Alwood (campaign 11). In addition recent discussion with Commissioners regarding a new model proposed of care delivery of the 'Team around the Child' and streamlining of bed numbers is expected to result in a better staffing position. An updated position will be provided next time

## **5. Gender Mix**

It is also recognised that gender mix of staff needs to be carefully considered in our services in order to meet the needs of our patients. We continuously review and move existing staffing to ensure that male and female staff are balanced in areas where patient presentations respond positively to a mix which reduces risks of incidents of violence and aggression. However it is notable that most applicants new to the Trust are predominantly female. This issue is informing future NTW promotion and recruitment campaign materials and outward facing discussions with HEE, local communities and employers subject to transformation to assist in alternative career choices

## **6. Complexity**

It should be acknowledged that patients admitted to Trust services are presenting with much more complex and challenging problems resulting in higher acuity levels and there is an associated challenge in ensuring staff have the right skills to meet client needs. This is being progressed through planning delivery of staff training and development internally and also informing the Continuous Professional Development Review being undertaken by Health Education North East which has been delayed is due to report findings in March 2016. . Meanwhile in NTW we have agreed the Positive and Safe Practice Strategy and associated training and PGN. Work continues on the Engagement and Observation Policy to roll out into care areas beyond SGP. Both of these enablers will assist in reinforcing practices, which should assist teams in reviewing their approaches to more complex patient needs.

## 7. Specialist Care Group and Inpatient Services

Over the past 6 months, staff have been recruited as follows:

Specialist	Band 2	4
	Band 3	47 (21 are call handlers)
	Band 4	6
	Band 5	11
	Band 5	19 (1 CYPS. 1 CYPS Community)
	Band 6	6 (1 CYPS) 19 (3 adult ADHD, 7 Community CYPS, 9 CYPS/inpatient)
Community	Band 4	1
	Band 5	11 4
	Band 6	15
Inpatient	Band 4	3
	Band 5	21
	Band 6	5

The flexi pool arrangements cover all hospital sites and are essential to providing the flexibility to respond to sudden staff shortages or increasing clinical demands. They also provide a known and established group of staff from which to recruit to any emerging new vacancies. These staff know both services and patients; they have been essentially 'home grown'.

In Campaign 11 we have significantly increased the numbers of staff within the flexi pool and this includes Band 2 Healthcare Assistants.

Flexi pools are established within Hopewood Park, St Georges Park (which includes Northgate Hospital), St Nicholas Hospital and we are going to re-establish the flexi pool at WGP.

Numbers for Flexi Pool have increased by the following:

Band 2	19 Flexi pool
Band 3	46 Flexi pool

## 8. Marketing NTW as an employer of choice

We have continued to promote NTW through a number of routes which include TV, radio, and national press as well as working with local schools and colleges.

## **9. Workforce developments**

### **9.1 Unqualified Staff Career Pathway developments**

In line with the Nursing Workforce plan and growing our own qualified staff through a supportive approach, the Trust has supported unqualified staff in securing places on the Foundation Degree Course at Teesside University and a number of these staff have progressed to secure posts as Assistant Practitioners across the Trust. We are currently planning for the September 2016 cohort Foundation Degree intake.

The Trust has also supported a number of unqualified staff in securing places on the Open University Registered Mental Health Nursing Course. These staff are currently in their first year of training, and the feedback thus far is extremely positive.

We appointed two staff from our Trust on the Open University Course for Registered Nurse Adult Training. The feedback has also been extremely positive.

Whilst we fully support and encourage staff to apply for these innovative opportunities we also need to support Ward Managers in negotiating at what time period staff are to apply so this does not impact upon patient care.

### **9.2 Healthcare Assistants: Band 2**

The Trust has appointed a number of Healthcare Assistants to services as above. The introduction of these roles has allowed teams to reconfigure existing Nursing Assistant posts and recruited Healthcare Assistants to improve career pathways for unqualified staff.

Feedback has been very positive, initially there was some learning in terms of role and responsibilities and differences between grades but now they are established and are very quickly progressing to Nursing Assistant posts. We are reviewing the option of Managers having the authority / ability to promote into Nursing Assistant posts on the ward they are working.

Longer-term there will be Healthcare Assistants across all services (inpatient) with a minimum of two per ward and these staff will engage in the 'Care Certificate' a current national initiative as part of this. All Healthcare Assistants are invited to attend monthly peer support sessions as part of enhancing their knowledge base.

### **9.3 Nursing Assistants: Band 3**

The Trust has invested in the further development of Nursing Assistants and encouraged staff to apply for Open University or Foundation Degree opportunities. It has been extremely important to acknowledge the changes for Nursing Assistants with the introduction of Healthcare Assistants and Assistant Practitioners and we have peer support for these two groups but we do not yet have a peer support for Nursing Assistants and this is an action for consideration to be taken forward by the organisation.

There will continue to be ongoing review of the establishments of Nursing Assistants along with Healthcare Assistants and Assistant Practitioners and how these align to skill mix within all clinical services.

#### **9.4 Assistant Practitioners: Band 4**

The Trust now has 11 Assistant Practitioners in the Specialist Care Group and these are based in Forensic Inpatient services, WGP and Autism services. Similarly there are seven Assistant Practitioners within Inpatient Services working across all strands of service. The recruitment of Assistant Practitioners to all services with a minimum of two per ward.

The introduction of the Assistant Practitioner role is allowing Staff Nurses to spend more time with patients as tasks are being delegated accordingly.

#### **9.5 Staff Nurses: Band 5**

All Managers within the service recognise the value in supporting our Registered Nurses working across fields of practice and this is being taken forward in all services. We recognise the challenges of supporting newly qualified staff and the impact of this on existing mentors in terms of numbers / capacity however; staff are clearly committed to making this a success since the last report the number of Mentors to support staff in the organisation has increased and additional Mentorship places have been confirmed by University of Northumbria

Newly Qualified staff are offered Peer Support Days and also their formal preceptorship. In Campaign 9 (October 2015) we introduced contact days to those staff due to Qualify in March as evidence would suggest that if you do not maintain the contact with staff it generates uncertainty about their future and the staff will apply elsewhere for posts. The contacts days will continue as part of Values Based Recruitment.

Senior Nurses, Nurse Consultants and Clinical Nurse Managers support the ongoing development of Band five staff nurses and deliver developmental sessions for Staff Nurses focussed upon their professional development.

#### **9.6 Clinical Team Leaders: Band 6.**

The numbers of existing Clinical Team Leaders within services continue to be subject to review and this will continue over the coming months ensuring numbers reflect needs of service and patient safety and quality. Clinical Leadership at this level being essential for each Ward based team.

The Trust continues to offer a diverse range of nursing career pathways, which is essential to staff retention. We have introduced secondment opportunities within Adult Specialist Services with the aim of exposing our staff to Senior Roles (Clinical Team Leader), which is in line with the Nursing Strategy and allows staff that exposure to Senior Role.



## **Conclusions**

This report aims to provide the Trust Board with assurance in relation to Safer Staffing and work undertaken to attain the most effective skill mix within services. The Care Groups continue to monitor their nursing skill mix and use of temporary staff and adapt the workforce establishments accordingly to ensure skilled and safe levels of care provision. It is recognised however that recruitment and promoting NTW as a good diverse employer continues to remain our key focus and this is a matter afforded the utmost priority in the organisation.

The Board is also asked to acknowledge that Central Recruitment Campaigns are having a positive impact not only on addressing vacancies but also ensuring staff are only recruited if they are able to demonstrate they have the appropriate attitudes and values to provide the high standards of clinical care delivery expected by this organisation.

We are confident that services are continuing to think very differently when considering the needs of our patients specifically in relation to innovative workforce solutions

Progress will be reported to the Board in the next report.

**Anne Moore**  
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**Specialist Care Group**  
**March 2016**

**Vida Morris**  
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**Inpatient Services**  
**March 2016**