

Proposal to Suspend the NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff Return - Consultation

Background

This note concerns the Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff Return aspect of the annual NHS Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS) Non-Medical Workforce Census, the remainder (and bulk) of the HCHS Census publication is unchanged.

In the short term, the NHS Information Centre (NHS IC) is intending to suspend this aspect of the collection and remove this data from the associated publication for 2011. The reasoning behind this decision is set out below.

For information the link to the 2010 HCHS Non-Medical Census publication, including bank nursing staff is: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/workforce/nhs-staff-numbers/nhs-staff-2000--2010-non-medical> where figures on qualified and unqualified nurses have been published separate from bank figures for a number of years because of known data quality issues and to show a truer picture of the NHS workforce.

Our reasons for suspending the collection:

- Fundamental review of NHS data collections – the future of all central collections from the NHS are under review, with the default position being that all collections should be ceased unless it is possible to provide a strong case for their continuing.
- Business priorities – the NHS IC in line with other public sector bodies is seeing its funding for core business being reduced. Therefore the NHS IC has to prioritise work to the reduced resources available.
- Fit with workforce information - the NHS IC has assessed the quality, strategic value and amount of added value of the different data collections and datasets. There are several drawbacks to the bank nursing aspect of the non-medical workforce census which do not apply to other workforce collections, such as:
 - ❖ The collection is only run once per year, and therefore is out of step with other HCHS workforce information which is now available monthly or quarterly via the Electronic Staff Record (ESR) for all but the 2 non-ESR foundation trusts.
 - ❖ Local data is not seen as useful for management and other purposes as it only covers a snapshot and does not fulfil a local need.
 - ❖ There are a number of limitations due to data quality issues including the uneven application of guidance, such that returns are not always fully comparable
 - ❖ The data does not (or should not) include agency staff, and this limits its potential value.

- ❖ Unlike other NHS Workforce data the returns are only made at an aggregate level which creates significant issues for the new headcount methodology as it introduces significant duplication of substantive staff that cannot be centrally removed through data cleansing.
- Resource intensive – the bank return is a manual collection and both its completion in the NHS and the processing of the returns at the NHS IC are very resource intensive (it does not fall directly out of an administrative system).
- Data coverage - there is no equivalent bank survey for other aspects of the NHS workforce where bank working is applied – for example Scientists and Administrative staff.

Questions

(1) Do you support our proposal to suspend the NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff Return?

(2a) Do you have any strong objections to our proposal to suspend the NHS Nursing and Midwifery Bank Staff aspect of the annual NHS Non-Medical Workforce Census?

(2b) If so, please can you explain how our suspending this collection will impact upon your work?

(3) Please can you provide any suggestions as to how we could improve the utility of the information collected, should it continue?

Please send your responses to these questions with the subject 'Bank Nursing Consultation' to enquiries@ic.nhs.uk by 16th September 2011 to enable us to consider all responses prior to the 2011 collection date.