Primary Care Workforce Survey Scotland 2017
A Survey of Scottish General Practices and General Practice Out of Hours Services

An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release
This report by the Information Services Division (ISD) presents results from the 2017 National Primary Care Workforce Survey. The survey is an important source of information to support workforce planning for primary medical services. The report presents estimates based on the responses to the survey by general practices and GP Out of Hours (GP OoH) services.

A total of 774 general practices (82% of eligible practices) responded to the “In Hours” survey. All 14 NHS Boards responded to the GP OoH section.

Main Points
- While the estimated headcount of GPs working in Scottish general practice has changed very little over time, the estimated Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) of GPs has been declining since 2013 (from 3,735 in 2013 to 3,575 in 2017; a decrease of over 4%).
- The estimated WTE of registered nurses and Health Care Support Workers employed by general practice increased between 2013 and 2017, by 9% and 33% respectively.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of responding GP practices reported current GP vacancies, compared to 22% in 2015, and 9% in 2013. In contrast, only 6% of responding GP practices reported vacancies for registered nurses.
- Over a third (36%) of GPs and more than half (55%) of nurses working in Scottish general practice are aged 50 years or over.
- Within GP OoH services, 10% of the GPs worked 1,000 hours or more over the year and their total annual hours accounted for nearly half (46%) of the total GP hours worked.
- All NHS Boards reported having to take actions due to being unable to fill GP OoH shifts as planned. The most common actions taken to fill shifts were for staff to work longer shifts and increased rates/financial incentives.
Background

Most general practices in Scotland are independent contractors and between 2004 and 2018 there has been no contractual requirement for them to provide information about the staff that they employ. Although information is routinely available on the headcount and age/gender profile of GPs in post in general practices, practices have not been obliged to report whether individual GPs work full time or part time or to provide information about other staff the practice employs. There is also a need for centrally collated information on the workforce involved in the provision of GP OoH services. The National Primary Care Workforce Survey was developed to meet these information needs. The new GP Contract to be implemented from April 2018 includes an agreement in principle for general practices to provide regular workforce information and work is currently underway to establish this.

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Further Information

Find out more in the Full Report. The data from this publication is available to download (report tables) along with interactive excel workbooks to provide more detail at a local level (NHS Board, HSCP). Refer to our web page for the 2017 survey material.

ISD also publishes routine statistics on General Practice available here.